DOVEDALE REVISITED

AND OTHER HOLIDAY SKETCHES

BY

THE AMATEUR ANGLER

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DOVE DALE
REVISITED

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Photo by] [*G. N. Bankart.*

WALTON AND COTTON FISHING HOUSE, BERESFORD DALE.

Frontispiece.

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DOVE DALE REVISITED

WITH OTHER

HOLIDAY SKETCHES

BY

THE AMATEUR ANGLER

AUTHOR OF "AN AMATEUR ANGLER'S DAYS IN DOVE DALE," ETC. ETC.

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To my Grandchildren

JUDITH AND ERIC,

and to all my other grandchildren whose names have not yet appeared in print,

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

I think I ought to have dedicated this, in all probability my last book, to my old friend CLARK RUSSELL, for he it was who first tempted me into print. I wrote some letters which appeared in The Fishing Gazette, *and therefrom proceeded in course of time my first little book,* An Amateur Angler's Days in Dove Dale. *I owe my old friend a debt of gratitude for many a kind mark of friendship since that time, and not the least for his having done me the honour of dedicating one of his charming novels to me; but I am sure he will pardon me for not dedicating this volume to him, firstly, because it is not worthy of him, and, secondly, because there would have been a little tempest among my grandchildren. "Mind, Grandpa," said pretty Judith, shaking her finger at me—"*remember!!*" The worst of the business is, there is such a lot of these grandchildren, who, because I have already printed the names of two or three of them in my books, consider themselves to be slighted because they have not had books dedicated to them also! Why, bless me, if I were to write a book for every one of them, the British Museum would hardly hold them!—and, worst of all, nobody would* buy *the books if I printed them. I hope I have solved the difficulty by dedicating* this *book to them all in a bunch. A mere list of all their names would take up a whole page, and the printer won't allow it.*

THE AMATEUR ANGLER.

NOTE

IN bringing these holiday sketches together, I have added here and there much new matter. This has been more particularly the case in the chapters on the Dove and the Lea. With that portion of the Dove which extends from the head of Beresford Dale to Okeover Bridge, and with that short portion of the Manifold from its emergence at Ilam Hall, after its long subterranean passage, to its junction with the Dove, about a mile or so below, I may claim a fairly intimate acquaintance, chiefly as regards their angling capacities. I owe my initiation to the brotherhood of anglers to a visit of three weeks to Dove Dale, eighteen years ago. My personal impressions of that pleasant summer time were recorded in a small

volume entitled "An Amateur Angler's Days in Dove Dale." I had then reached the mature age of three score and a little more, but I was a mere juvenile in the art of angling. That little volume has long since been out of print, but for me it is a pleasant coincidence that my *first* and my *last* holiday book should relate to DOVE DALE—that is why I have called the present volume, which is the seventh of the series, "DOVE DALE REVISITED."

The river Lea I have no personal acquaintance with, beyond the one day's fishing recorded herein. I am indebted mainly to that very pleasant book, "Rambles by Rivers," by Mr. James Thorne, published by Charles Knight in 1844, for any information I have gleaned about that classic stream which was the chief scene of Izaak Walton's exploits.

THE AMATEUR ANGLER.

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NOTE.—Some of the Lea and Dove illustrations are reproduced from the Lea and Dove (100th) edition of "The Complete Angler." Those on the Lea were taken by Dr. P. H. Emerson, and those on the Dove by Mr. G. N. Bankart.

DOVE DALE REVISITED

CHAPTER I

FROM "THE IZAAK WALTON" TO THE WALTON AND COTTON FISHING HOUSE, BERESFORD DALE

"Grey sky, green trees, a shadowed stream,
A gilded spire-top's distant gleam,
A rod, a reel, a book of flies,
A dozen pleasant memories.

"A homeward trudge thro' mist-wrapt night,
A heart and creel, in common, light;
Complete content—the day has brought it—
He fished for pleasure—and he caught it!"
(From *The Optimist*, by H. J. WISE.)

THESE lines, very aptly sent to me by a friend, appropriately head and represent the experiences I am now about to put on record.

On asking my fair correspondent who Mr. H. J. Wise is, or was, she replied: "No *mere*

man was ever half so charming! The lines were by Hilda Johnson Wise, who died, alas! Dec. 13, 1899."

The nineteenth century was in the youth of its old age, and had yet much of its work to do, and many have been the "choppings and changings in this mortal life" which it has witnessed since last I visited Dove Dale and "The Izaak Walton," in the summer of 1884, eighteen years ago and more. Outwardly the old inn has experienced no change at all. The old handsome gateway, with its stone pillars surmounted by the Walton and Cotton cipher, is just as it was. The cipher is wrongly drawn by the artist thus:

the first C should have been reversed thus—Ↄ. The cipher is evidently taken from that on the Fishing House in Beresford Dale, but the artist forgot to reverse the C, and he seems also to have trusted to his memory for the date 1666, which has no reference to any particular event in Walton's life unless it may have been

Photo by] [*R. & R. Bull, Ashbourne.*

THE IZAAK WALTON HOTEL, DOVE DALE.

the Great Fire of London, which, however, did not reach his residence in Fleet Street (near the west corner of Chancery Lane); the date on the Fishing House is 1674, which is doubtless the date of its erection. Walton had left Fleet Street, as well as his subsequent residence on the west side of Chancery Lane, a few doors from Fleet Street, before that period.

It is a pity the old signboard is not perfectly accurate in this respect, but it sufficiently indicates the proper route for weary travellers to take from the turnpike road up the coach drive which winds itself pleasantly through the green meadow to the door of "The Izaak Walton," and lands them comfortably in the tavern where it is good to be. This is surely the kind of inn that Shenstone had in his mind when he scratched these well-known lines on the window of an inn:

> "Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
> Whate'er his stages may have been,
> May sigh to think he still has found
> His warmest welcome at an inn."

And our host of "The Izaak Walton" has very appropriately quoted on his prospectus Dr. Johnson's reply to Boswell:

"No, sir, there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn."

In all these things time has wrought no change, nor has the interior of the house undergone any material alteration, except that as regards its accommodation it has moved prudently with the times, still preserving much of its ancient simplicity.

Looking up to it from the Manifold meadows on a bright afternoon it presents a most charming and restful picture to the eye, backed up as it is by the imposing green hill called Bunster. On its eastern side it looks down upon the green meadows which descend by a steep grade to the winding river Dove, and beyond it looks up to and smiles on the most picturesque of hills called Thorpe Cloud. The everlasting hills are the same, the old rivers Dove and Manifold are just as they were eighteen years ago. "The Izaak Walton" has the same familiar look; and may the time be very far off in the dim and distant future when the speculative builder shall turn his greedy eyes upon it with a view to converting the old and unique simplicity of "The

Izaak Walton" into a gorgeous and fashionable hotel.

"*Host.* Give me leave to tell you, sir, the pasturage hereabouts is very fertile, and you may remember how Mr. Cotton declares 'these hills breed and feed good beef and mutton.'

"*Angler.* Aye, and make the best cheese that goes to Derby market."—*The River Dove*, Pickering, 1847.

Our hostess of "The Izaak Walton" goes a step beyond this, for she makes the best butter in England, and has taken the prize at the Dairy Show at the Agricultural Hall.

"Dove Dale is the very paradise of gipsy parties. High-born and accomplished ladies, with well-bred gallants, and their liveried attendants; pleasant family parties with heaps of children; smiling papas and staid elder daughters with their most attentive young gentlemen; noisy country lots of a dozen youths and red-cheeked maidens are to be seen every bright day the summer through. . . . Oh, that *we* were young again!"

When I was last here it was in the bright summer time; the place was alive with visitors coming and going—just as described above by James Thorne in his "Rambles by Rivers," fifty years ago and more; now the holiday

season is almost over, and it has the more business-like look of an anglers' resort. There are still lingering here some tourists who stay on account of the salubrity of the climate and the beauty of the surroundings. Here are six or seven anglers, enthusiasts who ply the long-suffering Dove and Manifold with admirable care and patience, and with varying success. The learned professions are fairly represented just now by a barrister (whom, if I should have occasion to mention again, I shall designate as the "Master," on account of his great experience and his exquisite skill), a parson, a doctor, a major (a real one, not "Piscator Major"), a poet, and the humble amateur who pens these lines.

It would be easy, but it would not be interesting, to become sentimental on the changes in our own personalities which have taken place since our last visit; but sentiment leads to melancholy, and I came not here to make myself miserable, but to drive dull care away and be happy.

All this by way of introduction to the charms and the beauties of Dove Dale and the attractions of its lovely river.

Photo by] [*R. & R. Bull, Ashbourne.*

ILAM, FROM THE LODGE GATES.
(Thorpe Cloud in the distance.)

"The silver *Dove*, how pleasant is the name!"
C. COTTON.

Before entering on my own little excursions on the Dove I will give a brief account of its beginning and ending.

From its source to its union with the Trent the Dove serves as a boundary to the counties of Staffordshire and Derbyshire; its whole length is about forty-five miles. The source is in Axe-edge, not far from the little village of Dovehead.

The water bubbles up through a little well, whose sides are protected by a couple of flagstones.

"Here springs the *Dove*! and with a grateful zest
I drink its waters."
REV. J. EDWARDS.

In Mr. J. P. Sheldon's "Tour of the Dove, etc.," 1894, he says at Dovehead "they will find on a stone laid over the spring the monogram of Walton and Cotton which some reverent hand has carved."

The "reverent hand" I find explained in "The River Dove," Pickering, 1847, thus:

"*Angler.* And now by your leave, I'll grave the two first letters of their names in cipher on this very stone that is over the fountain.

"*Painter.* How mean you?

"*Angler.* Here are tools . . . so I'll make a rude copy of the cipher which is over the door of the fishing house."[1]

For some distance from its source it is of small size and not very picturesque. It finds its way to Hartington, and thence pursues its course down the Dales with which I am more or less familiar, and which piscatorially will engage my attention for a few days. Beyond the Dales it strays as it lists through broad and fertile valleys. It passes through Okeover to Ashbourne, thence past Snelston and Norbury, near to Uttoxeter, by Sudbury to Tutbury. It passes Eggington, and opposite Bladon Castle it joins

"The crystal Trent, for fords and fish renowned."

It is not perhaps generally known that the country is indebted to our charming Dove for one of its sweetest lyrics: for if Tom Moore had never resided on its banks the song, "Those Evening Bells," might never have been written.

I was reminded of the fact by Mr. Joseph Hatton, who has just published a bright little

[1] This, however, is an imaginary conversation in Cotton's time, though written in 1847.

book entitled "Cigarette Papers" (Treherne), in which he says, prettily enough: "Tom Moore lived a lonely but happy life on the banks of the Dove near Ashbourne. He set the music of the local bells to immortal verse."

At the present writing I know not, any more than you, what each day may bring forth, but I propose to jot down day by day whatever little incidents may seem to have any, even very trifling, interest, for one's life is made up of little things. I shall have, I fear, much to say about the weather.

Tuesday, September 30th.—I arrived here in very discouraging weather—a persistent east wind, frequent sudden showers.

I strolled down in the evening to take a first glance at the river at the bottom of the meadow which adjoins the house. There is the identical pool overhung seemingly by the identical branch on which it seems but yesterday that I left my cast and fly. A leatherbat more venturesome than the trout was attracted by the barbed betrayer swinging in the wind, had seized it, and I found him next morning with the fly still in his mouth, floating dead on the water, but still suspended to the branch, hanged and drowned!

Wednesday, October 1st.—I commenced angling operations, and never was an adventurous old angler more thoughtfully or more kindly guided and guarded than was I by my good friend, our host of "The Izaak Walton," who is an expert fisherman, knowing most things about angling. We carried our luncheon with us, and fished up the Dale as far as my old acquaintance, Reynard's Cave, which has the same old look (not possible fully to convey by photographs). On my last visit I was tempted to climb up to the kitchen, and thence on to the top of the hill; there was no rope to help me then as there is now, and I was young and active, having barely turned three score; but now, although I could just as easily do it—*le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle.* We fished all day, but with no success; mine host got a brace of very small trout and I got nothing.

In the smoke-room our various daily adventures were duly discussed, and it was rather consoling to find that not one of the experts, these experienced hands, had done much better than ourselves. That smoke-room is as cosy as it is old-fashioned, with a large recess in the window, forming a comfortable seat for three or

four people. Above it is a row of a dozen pewter-plates, polished as bright as silver, and in the middle is a big bright pewter-dish, kept there as a reminder of the jolly times of long ago, and not for use in these degenerate days.

> "While broken teacups, wisely kept for show,
> Rang'd o'er the chimney, glisten'd in a row."

The Master laid down the law in a big arm-chair; the Doctor told stories in the window-seat; the Parson read interesting bits from "The Complete Angler"; the Poet was argumentative and facetious. It was soon fully understood between us that our failure to catch any fish was due entirely to the weather, and not to our want of perseverance, of pluck, of energy, or of consummate skill and knowledge. We all agreed in this, that there *are* trout and grayling both in the Dove and the Manifold, and in the united rivers, and big ones too, but they will not be caught until they choose to do so by deigning to rise at a fly, for we are all *dry fly* fishermen here.

Thursday, October 2nd.—This was also a cold and windy day. The Master, the Parson, the Major, the Doctor, the Doctor's wife, and the Poet went forth to fish, full as usual of bright

hope, some to the Manifold, others to the Dove. To the latter went I, and my *fidus Achates*, the landlord, went with me, he in waders, I only in my knee boots. I found myself in much the same predicament as *Painter* in the following scene:

"*Painter.* Halt, good sir; you do not expect me to walk into the river!

"*Angler.* If you are resolved against it here you may stay; for you see how the river washes the very basement of this perpendicular rock, and climb you cannot. Come, sir, follow me bravely, it is but 'a spit and a stride'; or I'll carry you pick-back."—*The River Dove.*

We wanted to cross the river at a certain point, and as it was a long way up to the bridge, he made nothing of taking me on his back, and, like Friar Tuck and Robin Hood crossing the river, we must have made a pretty picture, had one of our young ladies chanced to have been there with her Kodak. He landed me safely.

There was a well-known pool where big grayling lie, but they took little notice of a fair rise of fly on the water and floating over them. An occasional rise amid-stream drew my attention. I soon had fast hold of a big fish and

Photo by] [*R. & R. Bull, Ashbourne.*

ABOVE THE STEPPING STONES, DOVE DALE. (THE IRON GATE.)

landed him. Of course I thought I had hold of a grayling. I fished for a grayling, with a grayling fly, in a noted grayling hole; and yet when I landed my fish he proved to be a lovely trout, and this, be it remembered, was on October 2nd.

Mine host and I discussed the various merits of this fish—its lovely complexion, its fat and beautiful condition, its length, its breadth, its height, and its weight—and the dispute ran high on some points, I maintaining his weight to be 16 oz. at least, and mine host that he was not more than 12 oz.; during this long discussion my lovely trout,

> "Cast on the bank, he dies with gasping pains,
> And trickling blood his silver mail distains."
>
> JOHN GAY.

We agreed in this, that it is a cruel law which forbids the taking of trout at such an early date.

Not long afterwards the same thing occurred again. I fished for a grayling, and again I hooked what turned out to be a beautiful trout; and so it was all the time; we could catch nothing but pesky trout, when we wanted grayling.

Sir Humphry Davy was fishing in the Teme

near Leintwardine, in the month of October, when the following conversation occurs:

"*Poiet.* I have basketed (to coin a word) three trouts and six graylings.

"*Phys.* And I have taken seven graylings. I caught trout likewise, but not considering them in proper season I returned them to the river." —*Salmonia.*

In those early days of the nineteenth century —probably about 1825—the angler was a law unto himself as regards *close* time, and the foregoing conversation shows how that moral law operated—one "baskets" his trout, and the other returns his to the river.

F. C. Hofland, writing in 1839 in reference to Dove Dale, says:

"Thirty years since, in company with two brother artists and anglers, I enjoyed in this enchanting valley some of the happiest days of my life. . . . We sallied forth every morning, carrying with us provisions for the day, and two or three bottles of Mr. Wood's brisk, light bottled ale, together with our fishing tackle and sketching apparatus, and there we spent eight successive days (Sunday excepted) in alternately sketching, painting, fishing and rabbit-shooting. We generally broke our meal at one o'clock in the day, either at Reynard's Hall, a picturesque cave in the rocks, or under the shade of the

Photo by] [*R. & R. Bull, Ashbourne.*

ENTRANCE TO PARADISE, ILAM.

P. 14.

alder trees. . . . At this period (*circa* 1809) fishing in Dove Dale was as free as it had formerly been to our father Walton and his disciples, but the water is now strictly preserved by Jesse Watts Russel, Esq., of Ilam Hall." —*Angler's Manual*, 1839.

Friday, October 3rd, was as usual a very bad day. I did not fish, but took a walk with my landlord to see Ilam Hall and the lovely scenery surrounding it.

The village of Ilam is well worth seeing. It is, as Walton says of one of his Lea scenes, "too pretty to look on but only on holidays." We saw it on a damp cloudy day—it was not brightened up by a solitary glimpse of sunshine; but even under such disadvantages it has a most attractive appearance. In the midst of the village stands a very beautiful cross, erected by Jesse Watts Russell, Esq., to the memory of his wife. It is in imitation of the Waltham Cross, elaborately and beautifully carved, and with statues of excellent workmanship in the niches. At the foot of the cross flows a fountain of clear pure water. An inscription in red and black letters tells of her virtues to whom the cross is raised, and, in allusion to the fountain, adds these lines :

"Dried is that fount, but long may this endure
To be a well of comfort to the poor."

Ilam Hall is a handsome building in the Tudor style, with a flag tower, and the grounds surrounding it are charmingly laid out, bordered as they are by the river, and above that a most lovely background of woodland scenery—just now in full foliage, and only beginning to show the autumnal tints; it will be still more lovely when the approaching Indian summer occurs, if such a season should occur in this hitherto gloomy autumn.

There it is that the river Manifold oozes out of the earth after a subterraneous journey of about five miles, and a few yards above it emerges another river, the Hamps. The latter sinks into the earth a little above the bridge at Leek, six miles west of Ilam. The Manifold disappears near Wetton Mill, five miles northward. The waters of the two rivers differ in temperature at their emergence by about two degrees, so that they do not anywhere intermingle. In flood-time, I am told, the Manifold and Hamps unite about four miles above Ilam, and, despite their underground courses, rush down the old original bed, which at other times is quite dry.

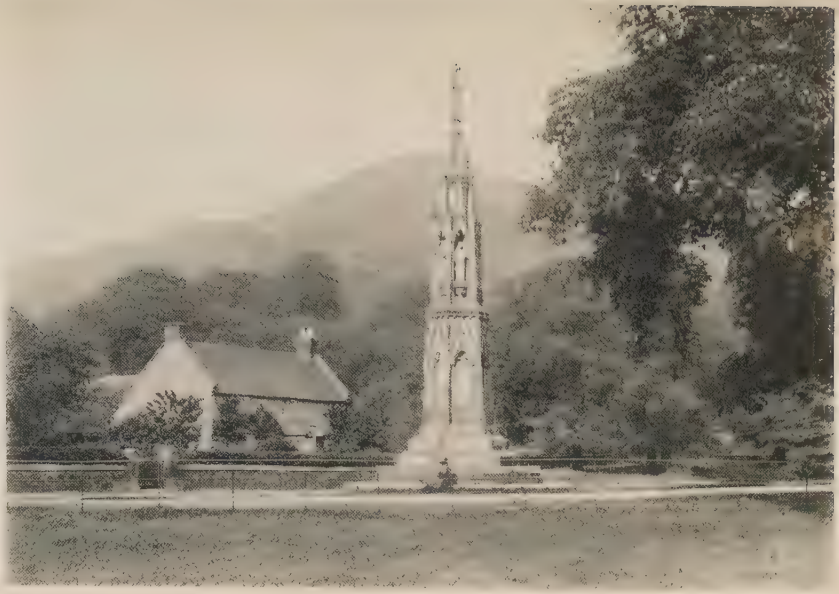


Photo by] [*R. & R. Bull, Ashbourne.*

CROSS AND FOUNTAIN, ILAM.

On the side of the hill, just above where the two rivers issue from it, is a little grotto, in which Congreve is said to have written his comedy of "The Old Bachelor" and a part of his "Mourning Bride."

Ilam Church stands in the grounds close to the Hall. It is ivy-covered, and very picturesque. On the north side is a mausoleum, which contains Chantrey's monumental group to the memory of Pike Watts, Esq. Mr. Thorne says of it:

"It is one of the finest works of Chantrey, and probably no other of that great artist's production is so fortunately placed. The venerable man is represented raising himself from his deathbed and stretching forth his arm in the act of imploring a blessing on his only daughter and her children, who surround his couch. The effect of this touching scene is undisturbed by any surrounding objects: it is alone in the chapel, whose sides and floor are of a sober tone, whilst the light is subdued by the stained glass through which it passes."

There is, or was, in the church a monument bearing an epitaph by Charles Cotton. It is thus given in his "Poems," 1689:

"An Epitaph on Robert Port, Esq., de-

sign'd for a monument and now set up in Elum Church in the County of Stafford."

There are twenty-six lines in all; of these the twelve following are the last:

"Here, Reader, here a Port's sad Reliques lye
To teach the careless World Mortality;
Who while he Mortal was unrivall'd stood
The Crown, and Glory of his Antient blood:
Fit for his Princes, and his Countries trust,
Pious to God, and to his Neighbour just.
A loyal Husband to his latest end,
A gracious Father, and a faithfull Friend.
Belov'd he liv'd and dy'd o'recharg'd with Years,
Fuller of Honour than of Silver Hairs.
And, to sum up his Vertues, this was he
Who was what all we should, but cannot be."

This Robert Port was a former owner of Ilam Hall. A descendant of his, the Rev. Robert Port, D.D., is now the much respected vicar of St. Matthew's, Denmark Hill.

With the Manifold river above Ilam I have no personal acquaintance, but "Piscator Major" has drawn my attention to an interesting monograph on the Dove and Manifold valleys by Mr. J. P. Sheldon, whose name I have already mentioned. His volume is illustrated by a series of charming drawings by Edward Roper, F.R.G.S. Some of them convey equally accurate

and far more picturesque views of the scenery than even the finest photographs.

From this work I learn that the sources of the two rivers, identical as to locality, are yet distinct. That of the Dove I have already mentioned. The source of the Manifold is found up by Badger's Croft and Boar's Grove, in the hills which run to the north-west, while the Dove pursues its course to the east, and after many miles of divergence they come together again below Ilam, as already noted.

Anyone really desirous of exploring the upper Manifold will do well to take Mr. Sheldon's book for his guide. During my short visit I found no opportunity of consulting it, or of visiting the upper portions of the river.

Thor's Cave is mentioned as being one of the most remarkable objects in the Manifold valley.

The Poet caught a fine grayling and rejoiced over it; the Parson got two trout and piously put them back; the Doctor and the Major were not successful; and the Master, disdaining trout, caught no grayling.

Saturday, October 4th.—Bitterly cold, windy, wet morning, blowing and blustering right down the stream, for whether the wind comes over

Thorpe Cloud, or down from The Hazels, or round the corner from the Twelve Apostles and the Lover's Leap, or from over the heights of Bunster, down stream it rushes to the detriment of all fishing, and especially from our side. The sun has not been seen in these regions for many a day. I caught one large trout and one small grayling—both went back to their native element, the first because he was a trout, and the second because he was not big enough for breakfast. The Master, I think, was mainly engaged in swearing at the trout that would come at him, and at the grayling that would not, and so his bag was empty.

The Parson, who is a good fisherman, went away for his Sunday duties. The Major departed, sadly bemoaning his bad luck, which, however, was only common to all of us. The Poet (I call him Poet, because I am unable otherwise to classify him—I have seen none of his poetry, but he sings divinely) came here six weeks ago a great invalid—he left this day in vigorous health. This was his first attempt at fishing, which his doctor had advised him to practise; he proved to be such an apt pupil of the Master that he left us an accomplished

angler. The Doctor, a young Irishman, six feet two in his stockings, a fellow of infinite wit and humour, left us this day with his young wife, also an enthusiastic angler.

This day I fished alone up the Dale. Our hostess sent my lunch up to me by Jack, our boy. He came mounted on a big white donkey, and in front of him was Master three-year-old Bobby; Miss Daisy, a bright, dark-eyed girl of ten, came with them. They found me plying my avocation at the feet of the "Twelve Apostles." These grand, lichen-mantled, steeple-like rocks stand as guardians at the entrance of the Dale, brow-beaten, as it were, by an enormous projecting rock on the opposite side of the river, from the top of which a despairing lover (or perhaps a despairing pair of them) is said to have leaped and buried his or their sorrows in the waters below—hence the rock is called the Lover's Leap. Daisy soon disappeared, scrambling up the rocky sides like a young gazelle, up and up amongst the hazel bushes, where, as she well knew, nuts were plentifully hidden up behind the inaccessible rocks.

No sooner had she disappeared than I, making a long cast over a rising fish, hung my fly on the

topmost branch of a young hawthorn bush away up among the rocks. I sent Jack up to get the fly, and so I was left alone with the baby. He was sitting sturdily on the donkey, holding the reins tight, and presently he managed to pull his head round towards home while I was adjusting my fly. I did not see the start, but Bobby was shouting "Dee-up, donkey!" and working his little legs on the donkey's side, and off the donkey went at a brisk walk.

As soon as I saw them, I walked as quietly and as fast as I could, so as not to start him off, but as I got up just near enough to put my hand on the bridle, off he bolted full gallop, Master Bobby clinging like a little man to his neck; he soon came tumbling down, to my no small alarm. Luckily he fell easily on the soft grass. After a jolly good roar, he was for a time pacified, but when he saw the donkey disappearing round the rocky corner he set up another hullaballoo, and I could do nothing to pacify him. There were a dozen excursionists on the other side who witnessed the whole of the tragedy, evidently with much amusement. I shouted for Jack till I was hoarse, but in vain: no Jack appeared for a long time. He eventually came along, quite

Photo by] [*G. N. Bankart.*

ENTRANCE TO DOVE DALE, DERBYSHIRE.

alarmed when he saw that the donkey had disappeared.

He said that somehow he had lost his way and couldn't get down nohow. I said, "You young scamp, you've been nutting." This he stoutly denied, but as I heard him cracking nuts all the evening afterwards I was obliged to doubt the truth of his assertion. Daisy turned up soon with a bag full of nuts, and as the donkey couldn't get through the iron gate, and was not fool enough to try to get over it, nor yet to swim across the river, he was soon captured. Bobby and Daisy and donkey started for home, and reached it without further disaster.

Monday, October 6th.—Bad as all the days have hitherto been (except yesterday, being Sunday, which was fine), this Monday was the worst of all. It began to rain early and it rained steadily all day, a cold, drifting drizzle. I fished all day in it and my labours were not rewarded. I may say, however, that I reached home at five o'clock, outwardly dripping with wet but inwardly as dry as a dry fly. I wore my india-rubber knee boots, and I was covered over by that really most valuable and useful article of apparel, "Burberry's Patent Slip-On." It is as

light as a feather almost, it presents no impediment in fishing, and this day certainly tested its impenetrability. I wore it all day in a steady downpour, and I finished up as dry as when I went out in the morning.

Mine host accompanied me this day up the Dale. The Master had preceded us; he had the key of the iron gate, and when he got through he carefully locked it, to keep out excursionists, as he said, and put the key in his pocket. He assumed that we had a duplicate key, which we had not. What could we do? Here we had to face that iron gate again, as I had done in the olden time. My friend, a giant in strength, strove with all his might to lift that great iron gate off its hinges, but it was not to be done. There was nothing for it but to climb over or to wade round the end of the wall in water almost up to my chin. To climb over the gate itself is impossible, but on the left of it and between it and the precipitous rock is a stone wall (as seen in the picture), and it is surmounted by a frieze of iron spikes six inches long. "Stone walls do not a prison make" for such adventurers as we are, nor are we inclined to regard iron bars as a cage. The landlord

scrambled over the spikes and I followed. We landed safe, and we fished away up the Dale. I caught a brace of very fine trout by a mighty long cast at the back of the island near the Twelve Apostles, and regretfully returned them to their native element.

The Master also had not been fortunate, and when we came back to the gate he found himself "hoist with his own petard." The key would not unlock the gate, and so while these two were pottering at the lock, the Amateur Angler, with his usual juvenile agility, climbed over the spiked wall. This wall presents a somewhat formidable difficulty to climbers less agile than myself. My companions did not care to face it, and being encased in waterproof waders, they preferred to take to the water; but I am not sure that the water did not over-top their waders, though they made no confession to me.

CHAPTER II

DOWN THE DALES FROM BERESFORD AND THE FISHING HOUSE TO THE STEPPING STONES, AND FAREWELL!

"And some delight it is the while,
Though nature now does weep in rain,
To think that I have seen her smile,
And haply may I do again."

CHARLES COTTON.

Tuesday, October 7th.

I HAVE now been here a week, and during the whole of the time the weather has been abominable—as bad for fishing as it could be—the wind always blowing down stream, howling round rocky corners, and more frequently than not accompanied by scudding showers; really fishing has been a farce; but we murmur not!

By way of diversifying our incessant labours

Photo by] [*R. & R. Bull, Ashbourne.*

NEAR THE LOVER'S LEAP, DOVE DALE.

and almost fruitless toils on the river, our good landlord volunteered to drive me and my son-in-law over to Hartington. We did not go into the village, but stopped short at the old mill, where they kept so many pigs as recorded in my old volume.

Jack drove the carriage back home, and we started on our ten-mile walk down the dales. Ah! what a delightful walk it was—for me at least—and the others, though they may perhaps have felt the fatigue a little more than I, yet seemed to enjoy it. If the sun did not shine on us, the wind at least had toned itself down to a pleasant breeze: the sky was leaden, and the tops of the precipitous hills, now wood-clad and now bare and rocky, were but dimly outlined in a hazy mist.

When I last plodded down these glorious dales, many years ago, it was in the gay summer time, and all their charms were enhanced by brilliant sunshine; now the scenery has a sober, not to say sombre, aspect. But it has its compensations: then we had to contend with sweltering heat, now we can saunter by the river-side, cool and calm and contented.

It was with a feeling of delight, almost akin

to veneration, that I was permitted once again to see and to introduce my friends to the outside of the Walton and Cotton Fishing House at the head of Beresford Dale, for strange to say our host of "The Izaak Walton" had never seen this remarkable temple sacred to all anglers, and yet he has shot rooks in the woods overhanging this spot and adjoining Beresford Hall (now pulled down).

I am glad to say that we found the little temple in a state of excellent preservation. Of course the door was locked, but we did not feel that we were guilty of impertinent curiosity when we strove to look into the sanctum through the windows. The motto above the door sufficiently justified us, "Piscatoribus Sacrum," and are we not piscators? Could we not say with "Viator," "Why then I perceive I have some title here, for I am one of them, though one of the worst"? There we could see the old circular marble table, and the same half-a-dozen old armchairs, and the old oak settee—all of which I presume are the same as those seen by me in 1884, but assuredly not those mentioned by "Viator," "all exceeding neat, with a marble table and all in the middle."

James Thorne quotes from some old British geography book an account of a visit to this *sanctum sanctorum*; the house was described as "being in ruins, the roof decayed, the inscription illegible, the table broken, and instead of being 'all exceeding neat,' all overgrown with dank moss and weeds; while, to crown all, the only access was through a broken window."

When Thorne himself visited it he found it "as perfect and as neat as when 'Viator' stepped into it." It was rebuilt early in the nineteenth century.

With regard to the Fishing House it may be a surprise to some to learn that, so far as I can discover, Izaak Walton *never saw it*—as is partly shown in the following conversation between "Piscator" and "Viator" ("Piscator" is Charles Cotton).

"*Pisc.* I will tell you that my house stands upon the margin of one of the finest rivers for Trouts and Grayling in England; that I have lately built a little Fishing House upon it, dedicated to anglers: over the door of which you will see the two first letters of my Father Walton's name and mine twisted in cypher; that you shall lye in the same bed he has sometimes been contented with.

"*Viator.* Stay; what 's here over the door? —*piscatoribus sacrum*—why then I perceive I have some title here, for I am one of them, though one of the worst; and here below it is the Cifer, too, you spoke of, and 'tis prettily contrived. Has my Master Walton ever been here to see it, for it seems new built?

"*Pisc.* Yes, he saw it cut in the stone before it was set up; but never in the posture it now stands; for the house was but in building when he was last here, and not raised so high as the arch of the Dore, and I am afraid he will not see it yet, for he has lately writ me word he doubts his coming down this summer, which, I assure you, was the worst news he could possibly have sent me."

The date on the building is 1674. In that singular letter of Walton to Cotton, thanking him for his "very pleasant useful discourse," it will be seen that he refers to the Fishing House. The letter is so interesting and *à propos* that I make no apology for giving it in full. It was written in 1676, when Walton was in his eighty-third year.

"To my most Honoured Friend, Charles Cotton, Esq.

"Sir, You now see, I have return'd you your very pleasant, and useful discourse of the art of *Flie fishing*. Printed just as 'twas sent me: for I have been so obedient to your desires, as to

endure all the praises you have ventur'd to fix upon me in it, and when I have thankt you for them, as the efforts of an undissembled love; then let me tell you, *Sir*, that I will really endeavour to live up to the character you have given of me, if there were no other reason; yet for this alone, that you, that love me so well; and always think what you speak may not, for my sake, suffer by a mistake in your judgment.

"And, Sir, I have ventur'd to fill a part of your Margin, by way of Paraphrase, for the Readers clearer understanding the situation both of your *Fishing House* and the pleasantness of that you dwell in. And I have ventur'd also to give him a Copy of Verses, that you were pleas'd to send me, now some Years past; in which, he may see a good Picture of both; and, so much of your own mind too, as will make any Reader that is blest with a Generous Soul, to love you the better. I confess, that for doing this, you may justly Judg me too bold: if you do, I will say so too; and so far commute for my offence, that, though I be more than a hundred Miles from you, and in the eighty-third Year of my age, yet I will forget both, and next Month begin a Pilgrimage to beg your pardon, for, I would dye in your favour: and till then will live,

"Sir,

"Your most affectionate

"Father and Friend,

"IZAAK WALTON.

"London, April 29, 1676."

There is no evidence in either volume to show that Walton ever did perform this pilgrimage. One of the marginal notes that Walton mentions is about the Fishing House: "There is under this Motto, the Cifer mentioned in the Title-page, and some part of the Fishing House has been described, but, the pleasantness of the river, Mountains and Meadows about it, cannot; unless Sir Philip Sidney, or Mr. Cotton's father were again alive to do it."

In that delightful book, "The River Dove,"[1] published by William Pickering, 1847, the author seems to have been impressed with the idea that Walton and Cotton had been together in this house, and he gives the following fanciful description of the interior of the house (as supposed to have been seen by them in Cotton's lifetime).

"*Host.* Gentlemen, the door is open!

"*Angler.* This is marvellously contrived; what a delight for fishers! all the wainscoting

[1] "The River Dove, with some Quiet Thoughts on the Happy Practice of Angling." The Note to the Reader is signed J. L. A. These are the initials of Mr. John Lavecount Anderson. He afterwards published a series of views of the river Dove and Beresford Hall, 1866.

covered with landscapes, and cheerful anglers on the banks of the river, sitting in the shade of rocks, or casting their flies into the stream.

"*Painter.* And fishes most delicately painted on the oak wainscoting.

"*Angler.* Aye, spotted trouts, and graylings done to the life.

"*Host.* And here are the portraits of Mr. Walton and Mr. Cotton, on the panels of the beaufet.

"*Angler.* And indeed very handsome and becoming figures.

"*Host.* Nor could they be more resembling; there is Mr. Walton in his 'sad coloured suit,' leaning against a rock, who is now going to bait his hooks; and Mr. Cotton has his fly rod in his hand, and a waiting boy behind with his landing net.

"*Angler.* Is this the portrait of Mr. Walton, designed by the gentleman architect from Nottingham?

"*Host.* The same; then Mr. Rolston undertook to paint this of Mr. Cotton, to be a companion picture to him he loves so dearly.

"*Painter.* I declare I have never seen anything to please me more. They are worthy of each other."

The following notes indicate its progress towards total destruction and its restoration:

In 1784 Mr. White of Crickhowel supplied Sir John Hawkins with the following de-

scription: "It had in the centre a square black marble table. . . . In the right-hand corner stood a large beaufet with folding doors on which were painted the portraits of Walton and Cotton attended by a servant boy. It was then considerably decayed, especially in the wainscoting and the paintings."

In 1811 Mr. Major gives an account of it written by Mr. W. H. Pepys, in which he says "it was fast going to decay. . . . Against the door on the inside were three large fragments of the table itself, which were of the Black Dove Dale marble."

In 1814 Mr. Bagster found it "much dilapidated, the windows unglazed and the wainscot and pavement gone."

In 1824 another writer says: "The windows are destroyed, the doors decayed and without fastenings . . . and the vane nodding to its fall."

In 1825 Mr. Jesse informs us that "the manor-hall and eighty-four acres of land were sold to Viscount Beresford for £5,500. About that time it was restored."

In 1838 it was reported by Shipley and Fitzgibbon as being "nearly in the same state as when the original constructor described it."

In 1844 (or thereabout) Mr. James Thorne says: "There it stands as fresh, as perfect and as neat as when he (Viator)

stepped into it. . . . There is something quite charming about its new-old book."

In 1884 the "Amateur Angler" had something to say about it, and now

In 1902 he ventures to put forth the preceding and following remarks.

Perhaps it is not sacrilegious to say that we saw within also a modern split-cane fishing rod and other utensils which suggested the desirability of keeping the door locked. I was sorry to see, however, that not only was the door locked, but the wicket gate which leads to the enclosure has just now had a new lock attached to it; it did not appear quite finished, and so luckily for us it was not locked, and we had the pleasure of sitting on the seats that surround the two lime trees that guard the entrance, to rest our weary limbs, and to eat our luncheon in peace and contentment.

I suppose there is something to be said in favour of locking this approach, and so excluding excursionists on the ground of possible damage to the property. My own impression is that excursionists are generally very harmless, and damage is far more likely to arise from resentment caused by too rigid exclusiveness than

by letting things remain as they were. I own I should have felt myself wronged, and I should have been cruelly disappointed, had I found that gate locked, and so have been shut out from even an outside view of this venerable shrine.

It is pleasant to see that the present proprietor is again planting trees and shrubs and flowers in the surrounding grounds, and when another summer comes they will present a bright and comely appearance to scenes already so grand and imposing in their natural beauty.

The sight and the scene brought vividly to my mind the memory of days gone by, and on departing I took off my hat and saluted, as all good anglers should, with a conviction that I may never look on the enchanting picture again.

In my little book, "Days in Dove Dale," I described the scene as follows:

"On leaving the cottage we suddenly came upon as lovely a bit of the river as is to be found anywhere. Here nature has at some not very recent period been helped by art; here are rustic stiles and seats,

'For talking age and whispering lovers made,'

and here and there beds of rhododendron, lignum-vitæ, and other shrubs and plants tastefully arranged, though now neglected."

The scene is altered now; the neglect I noticed then seems to have been perpetuated, but there is now an indication of a revival.

Next on our pilgrimage down Beresford Dale we came upon Pike Pool. The Pike stands in the midst of its pool, more covered with moss, and its head now overshadowed by the branches of trees which at the time of my last visit were not so prominent.

On the Staffordshire side, high up among the rocks, is a cleft called Cotton's Cave, and not far away is "Lovers' Leap," a sheer and awful precipice much grander than that in Dove Dale. On the top of it is what was once, perhaps, a garden where the two anglers sat and smoked their pipes (so says Mr. Sheldon).

In the fifth edition of "The Compleat Angler" it was delightful to find the following paragraph written by Izaak Walton himself in a marginal note to *Cotton's volume*:

"It is a rock in the fashion of a spire steeple, and almost as big. It stands in the midst of the river Dove, and not far from Mr. Cotton's house, below which place this delicate river takes a swift career betwixt many mighty rocks, much higher and bigger than St. Paul's Church before it was burnt."

And then Walton goes on:

"And this Dove, being opposed by one of the highest of them, has at last forced itself a way through it, and *after a mile's concealment* appears again with more glory and beauty than before that opposition, running through the most pleasant valleys and most fruitful meadows that this nation can justly boast of."

"This," says Mr. Thorne, "is an entire mistake. The *Dove* is nowhere *concealed* and it is not easy to tell how Walton could have so erred."

My impression is, that in using the word *concealment* Walton did not mean hidden underground like the Manifold, but that it is obscured by those "mighty rocks" and woods between which its sinuous course is hidden.

Beresford Dale possesses beauties of its own, which have been so often described by more gifted pens than mine, that I need not make an attempt which could only end in failure. The only incident that interrupted our walk down this dale was the shriek of a rabbit on the other side of the river. A stoat had seized and was clinging to his throat. One of us threw a stone at him, and the stoat quitted his prey, and

Photo by] [*G. N. Bankart.*

IN BERESFORD DALE.

was off like a shot into the river-bank, but the rabbit lay dead on the green grass.

"Beneath the quaint little manor-house of Wolfscote Grange," says Mr. Sheldon, "stands one of the boldest bluffs of rock, and at the foot of it is a cavern named 'Frank 's i' the Rock,' and so called on account of a man bearing that name, who lived in it many years with his wife, and had eleven children there." This is elsewhere called Franklin Rock (see illustration).

A little farther down we found the Staffordshire side impassable, and so crossed over by a very picturesque bridge called Wolfscote Bridge to the Peak of Derbyshire side. It forms a delightful picture when viewed from the open meadow below, overhung as it is by the green foliage of large trees forming a lovely background.

On our left, as we pass down the dale, we come upon an enormous rough-looking mountain with a horse-road leading from it to the bridge. This is called HANSON TOOT; it is the mountain down which, on their way from Ashbourne to Beresford, came "Piscator" and "Viator":

"*Pisc.* You will like it worse presently when you come to the brow of the Hill, and now we are there, what think you?

"*Viat.* What do I think? Why I think it is the strangest place that ever sure Men, and Horses went down, and that (if there be any safety at all) the safest way is to alight.

"*Pisc.* I think so too for you, who are mounted upon a Beast not acquainted with these slippery stones. . . . If you please, my Man shall lead your Horse.

"*Viat.* Marry, Sir, and I thank you too, for I am afraid I shall have enough to do to look to my self; and with my Horse in my hand should be in a double fear, both of breaking my neck, and my Horse's falling on me, for it is as steep as a penthouse.

"*Pisc.* To look down from hence it appears so, I confess, but the path winds and turns, and will not be found so troublesom.

"*Viat.* Would I were well down, though! Hoist thee! there's one fair slip! these stones are so slippery I cannot stand! Yet again! I think I may best lay my heeles in my neck and tumble down. . . . Pray, what do you call this Hill we come down?

"*Pisc.* We call it *Hanson Toot.*

"*Viat.* Why, farewell, *Hanson Toot.* I'll no more on thee. I'll go twenty miles first."

Passing down Narrow Dale, which extends from Beresford Dale to Load Mill and Mill Dale, and is truly a barren, wild-looking place

Photo by] [*G. N. Bankart.*

WOLFSCOTE BRIDGE AND FRANKLIN ROCK, BERESFORD DALE.

(The angler here represented is the celebrated John Fosbrooke.)

P. 40.

with steep and craggy hills, we came upon the Fish Hatchery, which on my last visit was quite new, having only just been erected by Sir Henry Allsopp, and was in full working order. Now, alas! it is in a state of absolute ruin, the tanks broken and rotten, the beds overgrown with weeds, altogether presenting an appearance of desolation.

Having refreshed ourselves with tea at Hambleton's newly-built, very pretty little temperance hotel in Mill Dale, Alstonfield, we proceeded onwards. Here Lord Hindlip, since our last visit, has erected some picturesque cottages for his keepers. Mr. J. P. Sheldon, writing in 1894, says:

"Immense numbers of young fry have been turned into the river in Lord Hindlip's domain; but of course they soon become free to riparian owners outside its limits, as they migrate up or down stream. The fishing hereabout is excellent."

We met Mr. Lock, the keeper, a friend of all at our hotel. He is a first-rate fly fisherman, and maker of the particular flies to which the Dove trout and grayling are most partial. He astonished us by saying that three days ago he

had caught seven brace of fine grayling, whilst we experts of the I. W. could catch none. On telling this to the Master he fully explained the mystery to our entire satisfaction, for we had begun to doubt our own infallibility.

"Pooh!" said he, "anybody can catch those tame fish! They are so strictly preserved up in those wilds that, unlike our wild and preternaturally cautious fish down in the lower waters of the Dove and the Manifold, these highlanders will go madly at anything that is put before them." Thus did the Master seek to soothe our minds and restore our equanimity.

As we approached Dove Holes, the northern entrance to Dove Dale, the shades of evening began to close over us, leaving us just sufficient light to bring out the magnificent rock on the right, and show with distinctness the grim outline of a lion's head, which gives it its name, "The Lion Rock"; "The Dove Holes" are two immense caverns in the rocks on the left. We explored one of them and found it to be a convenient cave for shelter in a storm.

"Ilam Rock" is seen further on, with the singular stone block called "The Watchbox," seated on the highest pinnacle of the rock and

Photo by] [*R. & R. Bull, Ashbourne.*

THE LION ROCK, DOVE DALE.

overhanging it. Our companion once saw a foolhardy fellow standing and waving his arms on the top of this pulpit. Here the Dale takes a turn, and we come upon that huge rocky pillar which is called Pickering Tor.

The path at best was slippery, and oftentimes rocky. We had hoped by way of diversion to run up to "Reynard's Cave," but when we got to the foot we thought better of it, and so we passed on, and it grew darker and darker. The cave known as the "Kitchen" I take to be the cave which is not visible until you have ascended and passed through the enormous arch which is at least forty feet high; then you come upon the "Kitchen," which is a very cosy little place. And there it was that Reynard, the robber, used to broil his chop and stew his potatoes.

The path grew rougher and steeper; we had frequently to cling to each other for support; and by the time we had reached the top of the Sharplow Cliff (I think it is so called), above the Lover's Leap, it was pitch dark, and the owls were flitting about on their noiseless wings, now and again hooting their weird shrill notes. It was there I saw in the distance a glimmering white light, which I at once pronounced to be

"Will o' the Wisp" (*ignis fatuus*) or "Jack o' Lantern." I was the more convinced because as we advanced, feeling our way foot by foot along the brow of the hill, it just as slowly and steadily approached us instead of receding (as "Will o' the Wisps" generally do). When at last it came up to us, or we came up to it, we found it was a sheet of white notepaper stuck on the end of a stake. On striking a light we read these ominous words:

"We have waited here till six o'clock to help carry you home. Couldn't wait any longer. Do take care of yourselves.

(Signed) "DAISY E."

The "Will o' the Wisp" proved to be our little friend Daisy, who had come to meet us with her great friend, the Master; they returned before it became very dark, leaving this note of warning behind them.

The descent of this Sharplow Cliff is dangerous by daylight, for a false step may send you rolling down over the rocks and into the river. Our guide, knowing every step and stone, helped me along, and we soon found ourselves safe and well in the welcome shelter of "The Izaak Walton." And so, for me, ended a memorable day.

The mention of these owls in the woods reminds me of a delightful article on owls in "The Nineteenth Century" for this month, November, 1902, by Mr. R. Bosworth Smith. He tells us that there are "three varieties of the bird which are to be found in England: the white, the brown, and the long-eared owl."

The white owl is also known as the barn and the screech owl, because of his rasping, piercing shriek. The brown or tawny owl is the one whose "most musical, most melancholy" tu-who-oo we heard in the woods. The following lines are from Mr. Smith's essay, presumably by himself:

"I would mock thy chant anew;
But I cannot mimic it;
Not a whit of thy tu-whoo,
Thee to woo to thy tu-whit,
Thee to woo to thy tu-whit,
With a lengthen'd loud halloo,
Tu-whoo, tu-whit, tu-whit, tu-whoo-o-o."

Mr. Smith plainly shows in his charming essay that these three kinds of owls, all of which are most destructive of rats and mice, are wholly innocent of the crimes of which all gamekeepers accuse them. He concludes by a strong appeal for their strict preservation.

Meanwhile, during our absence, the Master had gone forth to fish in the lower waters of the Dove, down Okeover way, and there met with adventure after adventure, piled on each other like Ossa upon Pelion. I cannot remember them all, but I think his first loss was his pipe, then his tobacco pouch, and then he lost his lunch, a packet of sandwiches, which fell into the water —which, by the way, might possibly have been the cause of the marvellous adventure which befell him lower down. He was wading, when all of a sudden he came upon the most extraordinary rise of fishes in a pool that he had ever seen in the most rampant May Fly season—scores of them were bobbing up on all sides of him, and "ne'er a graylin' amang 'em," as said the keeper who witnessed the scene from the bank. It occurred to me that this packet of sandwiches, gradually swept down by the stream into this trout pool, might have been the true cause of the commotion among them—who knows? Let some one try the experiment by throwing away his own lunch into the stream and watch for results! But the most extraordinary event that happened to the Master on that eventful day was that, struggling among the

slippery stones in the deep, he fell headlong into the water. He scrambled out filled up with water, and nothing dry but his hat, which he picked up, peacefully floating on the surface. He was more than two miles from home. He reached there with all the speed he could muster, slipped into the bath-room, had a hot bath and a change of raiment, and was in a very short time off to the river again, for he discovered that in his haste he had somewhere lost his waterproof cape. He found it awaiting him, hanging on a bush, and he returned home a happy man, not a bit the worse for his many mishaps.

Wednesday, October 8th.—The only fine day I have had since I came to Dove Dale, and I am glad to be able to report it. My fishing only resulted in a fine trout, which, in obedience to inexorable law, I put back.

Thursday, October 9th.—The very worst day of all—incessant rain all day without cessation. We fished through it all. Result: two small grayling; the Master still vexed by the persistent trout, of which he caught several and threw them back. He also brought home a brace of fine grayling.

Friday, October 10th.—My last fishing day, and a woeful wet one it was. The editor of "The

Fishing Gazette," for some purposes of his own, asked me to send him a Dove grayling of a pound or upwards. I tried all I could to get one, but I failed to catch one big enough. Our good Master came to the rescue. He hurried off down to the river, and soon returned with a lovely grayling, weight 1 lb. 3 oz., which he was good enough to present to me, and it was immediately despatched to Mr. Editor.

On Saturday, October 11th, I was obliged reluctantly to say farewell to "The Izaak Walton" and Dove Dale. I conclude this sketch by a brief retrospect of my visit. I had been there for about ten days. My foreboding about the weather has been amply justified. It has been bad for angling, bad for cycling, bad for touring, and in spite of it all I have during my visit revived so many pleasant associations with the past, and have found so much enjoyment in the present; I have been treated with so much kindness and attention by mine host and hostess, and by all with whom I have been brought in contact, that I must always regard this visit as one which will dwell in my memory as a very agreeable episode in my life.

It should be borne in mind that this, like all

my other sketches, is but the record of a few brief holidays snatched from the anxieties and worries incident to all who are involved

"In the hodge-podge of business, and money, and care,
And care, and money, and trouble."

The Angler's Song.

It is to such holidays as these that I owe the elasticity of spirit and vigour of bodily health which they have always renewed in me. I have not dared to intermingle my light sketches with moral reflections, because I know that I could not have made them interesting to my readers. I hope, however, I am not devoid of a true spirit of gratitude and thankfulness to the Giver of all good gifts for the measure of good health and other blessings which have accompanied me all the days of my life.

I have avoided any attempt to teach my brother anglers how to angle; I have entered into no discussion as to the breeding of trout or grayling, or as to their times and places for spawning; I have no physiological or mysterious theories as to close times or open times—I only know that it would have vastly added to my enjoyment if I had been fishing in Dove Dale at a time when both trout and grayling were

takeable. I am aware that the Trent Conservancy Board, who are supposed to conserve the main river and its tributaries, are, or ought to be, very strict in their enforcement of the law as to the close time for trout from and after October 2nd; but my own experience, and that of the other anglers whom I have met here, is that that date is unnecessarily early. All the trout taken by us were in perfect condition, and if the close time for trout had been October 15th instead of October 2nd, I am sure that I should have had a different story to tell. I suppose it may be taken for granted that trout in the same river do not all spawn at the same time—some are early, some late, and some barren. Of course, it is at all times a thrilling and pleasant sensation to have a struggle with a big trout, even when he rises to your grayling fly, and the grayling are sulking on the bottom, but one's pleasure is just a little modified by the pain one cannot avoid inflicting on the trout in extracting the hook, and the grief one cannot help feeling in parting with him by consigning him to his native element instead of to one's bag.

"Well, Mr. *Painter*!" says *Angler*, in "The River Dove," "What say you now to my Dove?"

Photo by] [*R. & R. Bull, Ashbourne.*

TISSINGTON SPIRES.

"*Painter.* I declare to you it is all a bewitchment: my tongue is ever ready to praise every next turning of the river more than the other; and I scarcely know which to like best, this angling or the landskips. Look you! There again are rocks springing up like steeples on this side and on that; it is all full of surprises.

"*Angler.* Those Rocks are called 'The Tissington Spires,' for that retired village lies but the distance of a walk to the left. . . . So now I have brought you within a view of Thorpe Cloud.

"*Painter.* Is that Thorpe Cloud? Well, he is more changeable than Proteus; for here he looks like a beheaded cone.

"*Angler.* And now, brother, you are come towards the end of the Dale.

"*Painter.* Tell me not this sad news! . . . or if we must needs depart, let us first '*sit down by the waters, and hang our harps upon the Willows*, and weep."

Now I too must say adieu to Dove Dale and its sweet stream, and close my account of this my short and last visit with these lines from "The Retirement," by Charles Cotton:

> "Oh, my beloved nymph, fair Dove!
> Princess of rivers! how I love
> Upon thy flow'ry banks to be;

And view thy silver stream,
When gilded by the summer's beam !
And in it all thy wanton fry,
Playing at liberty ;
And with my angle, upon them
The all of treachery
I ever learnt, industriously to try."

THE SOURCE OF THE DOVE.

CHAPTER III

IN THE VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE

THE WHITE HORSE OF BERKSHIRE, ITS ORIGIN—THE SCOURING—OUR PLEASANT QUARTERS—MAY FLY TIME—WATCHING A BIG TROUT—HOOKED AND LOST—A PAIR OF DOVES

"I go
Where thousand flaming flowers grow;
And every neighbouring hedge I greet
With honeysuckle smelling sweet;
Now o'er the daisied meads I stray
And meet with, as I pace my way,
Sweetly shining on my eye
A rivulet gliding smoothly by."

DYER.

June, 1901.

IT was in the vale of the renowned White Horse of Berkshire that I went in search of the May Fly, and a few other thing besides, in this month of June, 1901. There are other white

horses dug out of the sides of mountains, but this is the oldest of the family, and is supposed to have been carved out to commemorate a victory over the Danes in the year 871. It consists of a trench, two feet deep, cut in the side of a steep hill, and I am told that it is now partly obliterated, and stands much in need of another scouring out, such as that so graphically described by Mr. Tom Hughes in his work, "The Scouring of the White Horse." Here is a brief epitome of the origin of "The White Horse."

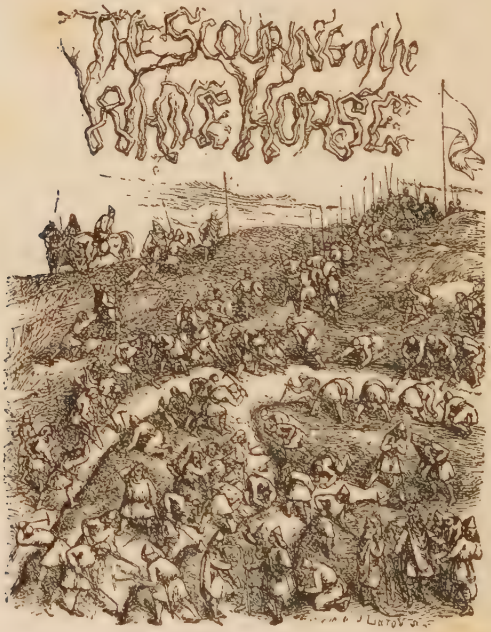
In the year 866 a great army of pagan Danes came over to Britain and landed in Norfolk. The cause of their coming was to avenge the murder of a man of royal birth named Lodbroc, who had two sons, Hinguar and Hubba. Their father had gone out one day in a small boat to catch ducks. He was caught in a storm and eventually cast upon the coast of Norfolk, where he was found with his hawk on his wrist, and taken to King Edmund, who, finding him to be a man of great skill in all kinds of sport, appointed him to a place in his service, which caused great jealousy in the heart of Berne the huntsman, who murdered him.

When Edmund discovered this, the huntsman was exposed on the sea without oars in Lodbroc's boat, and in some days he was cast ashore in Denmark. There he was put to the torture by Lodbroc's sons, and being a liar and murderer told them that their father had been put to death by King Edmund. This was the cause of their landing in England. They fought many battles with King Edmund, who was at length wounded and taken prisoner; he was tied to a tree and shot through the body with their arrows.

At Ashdown in the year 871 King Ethelred and his brother Alfred defeated these pagans with great slaughter. It is a year for Berkshire men to be proud of, and in memory of the great battle King Alfred caused his army to carve the White Horse, the standard of Hengist, on the hillside, just under the castle as you see it this day.

The last "scouring" took place in 1857; since that time it has been allowed to get silted up and overgrown with weeds. The commemoration of the millennial of the great king's death seems to be the time for giving it another scouring.

"Here we have," says Mr. Hughes, "a rude colossal figure cut out in the turf, and giving



THE SCOURING OF THE WHITE
BY PERMISSION OF MESSRS.

the name to a whole district; legends connecting it with the name of our greatest

king, and with his great victory over the pagans, and a festival which has been held at

HORSE. BY RICHARD DOYLE.
MACMILLAN AND CO.

very short intervals ever since the ninth century."

My landlord is a large farmer. He hunts with the V. W. H. pack, and knows all the country round; he is a good angler to boot, and has a good stretch of a good stream in a secluded corner of Gloucestershire, where three counties meet; and it was here that I and my good friend the Professor came to fish. Our stream is considerably less than a hundred miles away from Fairford on the Colne, the haunt of artists and of anglers. I and the Professor have only spent an hour or two at Fairford. We had a look at the beautiful church and its gorgeously-painted windows, and listened to the parrot-like historical essay on the paintings, from the Roman emperors to John the Baptist, delivered to us by a grey-haired, Roman-nosed, respectable old verger, who had his long story thoroughly by heart.

"But," says he, "I don't like to be put out. Once, some years ago, when I took to the work first and I wasn't so perfect as I be now, I was telling all about the Roman emperors, quite glib-like, when a lady pulled my arm and asked me some foolish question, and I was so completely knocked over I couldn't remember a bit after that, and I was obliged to send for my wife, who knows the whole story far better than me. I was vexed, to be sure."

Then we walked down to the river, and caught a glimpse of the beautiful Colne, and we coveted it—a wide-flowing stream with abundance of weeds kept down below the surface of the water, so that you could cast anywhere without let or hindrance. We had a short chat with Mr. Burge, the fishing-tackle maker, and gathered from him that there had been a fair May Fly season. The landlord of the Bull Hotel, a fine rambling old inn, holds, I think, about three miles of the river, so of course the hotel is the home of many a happy angler during the angling season.

I received a very cordial invitation for a day's fishing on the Colne at Bibury, but, unfortunately, I could not avail myself of it. I heard of grand doings on this river, and would gladly have tried it if I could have done so.

Our own stream is, as I have hinted, not a hundred miles away from Fairford—let those identify it who can. Generally, I may say that it is much smaller than the Colne and is a tributary of it. There are plenty of trout in it, and big ones, too, but they are not easy to catch. The Professor, who is as good a hand as one here and there, and I, who am but

a mere *amateur angler*, did not do as well as we might and could have done had circumstances been more in our favour. It is not much of a May Fly stream, but they are there and the trout take them well. You may, however, walk the stream for a long time without seeing one; there is nothing like what we have been used to on the Itchen or what one hears of on the Colne, so that one can fish with any other fly in the May Fly time with just as good a chance as with a fancy May Fly. The trout were not specially attracted by or gorged with it, and apparently our own success, such as it was, would have been just what it was had there been no May Fly at all. The imitations we used mostly were the various kinds of May Fly, the Alder, and Olive Dun, and what they call the Buzzy, generally known as the Spent Gnat—all hackle for wings and bodies. I had some very nice ones made by Mr. James Ogden, and which I have taken the liberty of calling "Ragged Robin," as they somewhat resemble that pretty field flower. I regard it as a telling name, and I hereby present it to the makers.

For the first three or four days the weather was favourable. We had some rain, and we

had wind enough in the right quarter to cause some ripple on our too clear water; together we captured about ten brace of really fine trout, many of them over 1 lb. or 1¼ lb., and certainly we lost many more than we captured. The weeds were too close together in patches for so small a stream, so that the trout rising and hooked in a narrow rivulet between two beds of weeds were into them like a shot, and once there it was no easy matter to pull them out—indeed, oftener than not, after many minutes of tussle, they broke away. One big fellow, for whom I had changed my fly three times, and who promptly took my "Ragged Robin," caused me no end of trouble; my rod was bent nearly double in keeping him from getting into a bed of flags; he managed in spite of my efforts to wind himself and my collar round the stem of a flag, and there he swung like a calf tied to a stake. Now, I should like to be told what one of your skilled anglers would have done to get that trout away. The only method I could think of was to try to unwind the collar by slipping it over the top of the reed, but it must be remembered that this bunch of flags was in deepish water near the opposite bank, and the

trout was in the rivulet, a yard or two wide with another bunch of weeds, and the main stream between me and him; there he was, plainly enough to be seen, quietly hanging on to my collar, and that swung round the stem. I held on, my hook held the trout, the flag held the gut, and for me to pull was only to risk rod, line, collar, and all. My trout settled the matter at last by making a tremendous plunge, leaving a large part of his lip firmly attached to my hook and himself at glorious liberty.

After that time the weather set in dead against us—a cold, sometimes bitterly cold, north-east wind blew aslant and down the stream and faced a blazing sun. There is very little stream in our water—it mostly runs dead and slow, and as transparent as glass; we could almost read a newspaper on the gravel. There were the big trout, floating double, trout and shadow, their shadows so plainly outlined on the sunless side as to make one think they were a brace. Useless to cast over them ever so daintily; rather aggravating as well as amusing to see a big trout come up to your fly, examine it critically, and allow it to pass on. I found that when he had made this critical examina-

tion it was useless to pass the same fly over him again, and if you changed your fly for something more like the insect he was now and then sucking in (for he never makes a plunge in such circumstances), he treated it just in the same contemptuous way. After a good deal of fruitless practice of this kind, we made the wonderful discovery that it is work and skill thrown away to cast a fly over a trout in bright, dead water, especially when the sun is on it. Of course we waited and watched for a windy ripple and a clouded sun, but for this we had often long to wait.

It was useful experience, for we soon came to know the exact spot where every big trout lay, and we were not long in finding out that they generally chose for themselves the most inaccessible quarters; they really seem to know precisely how overhanging branches or tufts of weeds, or spreading willows and bushy banks, old oaks spreading their long, leafy arms down low over the water, combine to protect them from the wily angler.

I know a spot where a brown trout lies, just on the edge of the shade of a very thick and prickly hawthorn; the Professor, who discovered

him first, says he is the monarch of the stream, and claims him as his own particular property. To cast up over him was quite impossible. An ardent angler, regardless of having his clothes torn off his back and his flesh excoriated by steel-pointed thorns, may perhaps sit silently in that pleasant bush for an hour or two, and it is just possible that he may wriggle his fly down over him; then what may happen goodness knows, for I should say that to land a 2-lb. or 3-lb. trout with a fly-rod in the middle of a thornbush is not a pleasant or tempting operation. Now I really believe that I once did get a rise out of that trout. I got over a stone wall into the next field above, and under a willow which hung over the water I managed to get a long line out, and allowed my "Ragged Robin" to float gently down under the willow and round the corner under the hawthorn, where the big trout lay, quite out of my sight, and there came a big splash just about his lair. I quite believe he came at me. I struck as soon as I could, though I do not believe in very quick striking down-stream, and I probably was too quick, for my line came home free. I did not even prick the old gentleman—he is very

wide awake. The Professor was not with me at the time. I wish he may get him before he leaves.

It saddens me to tell that my May Fly fishing in the month of June, 1901, has come to an end, as all pleasant things do in this changing world. The Professor and I had a joyful time during the ten or twelve days we spent together in this secluded, quiet spot, discovered for us by Piscator Major, and hitherto quite unknown to either of us, in the Vale of the White Horse. It was a great disappointment to us that the Major could not join us. Truly, a pleasant spot it is, and I shall always look back upon the time I spent there as a delightful episode in the experience of my old age. We felt sprightly and young as we sallied forth every morning from the nice old farmhouse, after a sumptuous breakfast with the family.

Ah, that butter and cream, that ham and those eggs! You cannot get such a ham as that, you Londoners, for love or money. I wanted to buy the other hind leg of that same pig, at present reposing on the rack, but neither Mr. nor Mrs. P. would part with it; these good things are not for sale. We all started fair on

that lovely ham the first morning, and nothing remained but the bare bone when we left.

We sallied forth, I say, every morning—"Youth at the prow, and pleasure at the helm" (if such a metaphor may be applied to an old man going a-fishing), our satchels well lined with sandwiches cut out of that wonderful ham, and at midday, wherever we could find a cosy corner sheltered from the blazing sun or blustering wind, we feasted as hungry men should. Talk about catching fish! Of course we caught them whenever we could—and who could work harder at the sport than we? But if we didn't catch them, what cared we? We were as happy as young kingfishers, the Professor and I. Who, indeed, could be otherwise with such a genial, jovial, humorous, pleasant companion as the Professor?

To a worn-out old Londoner I wonder if any recreation can be found more exhilarating, more inspiring, more enjoyable—if only he can bring his jaded mind into unison and sympathy with his surroundings—than to roam quietly by a pleasant stream, through meadows bespangled with the lush glories of the spring, buttercups and daisies, red clover and white, field mar-

guerites (or moon-daisies), rattle-grass, ladies' fingers, ragged robins, meadow-sweet, and a thousand other pretty things all mingled together to form a solace for old eyes and a soft carpet for wearied feet. These pretty things, so enchanting to the eye, so sweet and alluring, can hardly be looked on as unmixed blessings for the angler—a white daisy or yellow buttercup so easily picked up by your backward cast as you are throwing over a rising fish is a novel addition to a Dun or a May Fly not at all attractive to your trout; and if your hook once lays hold of a stem of rye-grass or a sturdy old dried thistle or hemlock, it generally remains there. These, however, are but passing troubles.

I sat me down one lovely morning *sub tegmine fagi* (though mine was a willow, not a beech), the river running slowly over a rather shallow bed just in front of me and under a wood on the other side, for the purpose of watching the performances of a fine trout, 1 lb. 5 oz. in weight—I had caught his brother a day or two before, so I know. I sat there, pleasantly shaded from the hot sun, for three-quarters of an hour, watching that pretty trout. His headquarters, for predatory purposes, were out in

mid-stream, not more than five or six yards from and exactly opposite my seat; but he regarded me not, or only thought of me as a log, or as a bit of the tree, or something of no interest whatever to him. He could hardly be called a rover, but he kept a steady look-out ahead and aslant upwards on each side. If he saw, as I frequently saw, a small insect coming straight down, he waited till it was over him, and then he would quietly suck it down, scarcely disturbing the water; if to the right or left, he would go up slowly a few yards to meet it. Now and then he would dart off straight up stream as if startled by me, but it was only to drive off another trout, an intruder as big as himself; this one, without showing fight, would turn round and be off, and my champion would then return to his place and be on the alert. Curiously enough, there was another small trout constantly rising and making small circles in the water two yards beyond him, and of this he took no notice—he was probably his son, and allowed to get his own living under the parental eye. Not once during the whole of that three-quarters of an hour did that big trout make a single splash in the water, though I saw him take in scores of

insects. "Waiting for a rise" under such circumstances is slow work. I was well placed for watching the motions of this fish, but in the worst possible place for casting over him. I could not get further below him, and to cast down upon him from above would have been equally futile, so for the time being I decided to creep silently away without causing him any disturbance.

While I was waiting under my willow a pair of young turtle-doves came from the wood and alighted in the tree above me. One soon flew back into the wood, and the other flew down to what he thought was a patch of grass, I suppose to get a drink, but the patch was a treacherous piece of weed, and he flopped down into the water; it was amusing to watch his struggles to get out of the water and the weeds; he succeeded at last, and was soon off into the woods to dry his beautiful feathers.

This is a wonderful country for birds. I never heard so many cuckoos—from early morning to late at night the cuckoo's monotonous but interesting song, latterly running into three "cucks" to one "coo," as is his custom when contemplating departure, seems to be all round

and about you; and all other English birds appear to be doubly plentiful here; water-ousels, sand-pipers, and kingfishers are not wanting; nightingales, thrushes, goldfinches, green linnets, and the larger woodpecker are constantly heard but rarely seen the livelong day and night. I want to see the place in autumn,

"When all around the tempest rings,"

and I hope then to revisit this pleasant but nameless nook of Gloucestershire.

CHAPTER IV

A DAY ON THE TEME

THE OLD INN AT LEINTWARDINE DESCRIBED BY SIR HUMPHRY DAVY—THE RIVER TEEMING WITH GRAYLING—DRY FLY AS AGAINST WET FLY—THE DOWNTON CASTLE SCENERY DESCRIBED BY SIR H. DAVY—DR. JOHNSON'S OPINION ON ANGLING—DR. PALEY AN ANGLER

"I was taken by a morsel, says the fish."
GEORGE HERBERT, *Jacula Prudentum.*

September, 1901.

IT is a pleasant surprise to me to find that I have, unknown to myself, been fishing on the banks of the Teme in the footsteps of Sir Humphry Davy, and to my shame be it said, for it is only recently that I have made myself acquainted with that delightful angling book, "Salmonia, or Days of Fly-Fishing, by an Angler."

I know the old inn at Leintwardine very well, and I have in my possession a very pretty drawing of it on wood which was presented to me by Dr. Edward Hamilton (author of "The Riverside Naturalist," etc.) some years ago. I now, by his permission, give a reproduction of it. Dr. Edward Hamilton in his delightful book, "Fly-Fishing for Salmon, Trout, and Grayling," says: "No one can read Sir Humphry Davy's description of this fishing on the Teme without a longing desire to try his hand and visit such a valley and such a river." He adds that his "chief experience in this delightful sport has been on the Teme at Leintwardine, which I fished every September and October for sixteen years, and glorious sport it was." Here is what Sir Humphry Davy says of the inn:

"SCENE—*Leintwardine, near Ludlow.*

"TIME—*Beginning of October.*

"*Halieus.* You have reached your quarters. Here is your home—a rural, peaceable, and unassuming inn, with as worthy a host and hostess as may be found in this part of England. The river glides at the bottom of the garden, and there is no stream in England more productive of grayling. . . .

Drawing by] [*Dr. E. Hamilton.*

LEINTWARDINE BRIDGE, ON THE TEME.

P. 72.

"*Physician.* Are we to fish according to any rule as to quantity or size of fish?

"*Halieus.* You are at perfect liberty to fish as you please, but as it is possible you may catch grayling only of this year, and which are not longer than the hand, I conclude you will return such pigmies to the river."

Then follows a long dissertation on the nature, anatomy, and habits of the grayling.

I have frequently fished in the Teme above Leintwardine, and also below Ludlow, and it was on just such a day as described below by Poietes, though earlier in the season, that I had a day's fishing, not many miles away from the lovely scenery here described by Sir Humphry Davy:

"*Poietes.* This is a beautiful day, and I think for fishing, as well as for the enjoyment of the scenery, finer than yesterday. The wind blows from the south, and is balmy; and though a few clouds are collecting they are not sufficiently dense to exclude the warmth of the sun, and, as honest fishermen, we ought to prefer his warmth to his light.

"*Halieus.* I do not think, as the day advances, there will be any deficiency of light; and I shall not be sorry for this, as it will enable you to see the grounds of Downton, and the distances in the landscape to more advantage. . . .

"*Poietes.* This spot is really very fine. The

fall of water, the picturesque mill, the abrupt cliff, and the bank, covered with noble oaks, above the river, compose a scene such as I have rarely beheld in this island."

Yesterday was a glorious day for Charlie and me; it seemed to rain everywhere except on the particular stretch of the Teme to which we had special access. We had a six-mile drive across a lovely country, and found the river Teme teeming with fine grayling. In the present state of my health I could not venture to wade, and so I lost many a good chance. Charlie is a nipper, and wades, and with three flies on his cast and the sunk-fly process brought home ten brace of fine grayling, from six ounces to a pound, most of them big ones, which is about as large as they run. I am sorry to say that with my single dry fly, and fishing from the bank, I did not do much. Dry fly as against wet did not shine on that occasion. It was really a most charming little outing, and one I shall not soon forget. I would describe the place, the river and scenery, but that would be telling, and I must not give even a hint, on penalty of never getting another ticket. I may say that the scenery on this part of the Teme

greatly resembles, and is almost as lovely as, that of Dove Dale. I will only add that it is strictly preserved, and that it is regarded as a great privilege to be allowed to fish there at all. The grayling rose fairly all day, but in the evening, when we were obliged to leave them, the river, especially in the deep and slow parts, was really bubbling over with rising fish. It was quite interesting to see through the bright, clear water the big grayling come sailing straight up from the bottom to suck in the small insect, without much fuss or fluster. Red Tag, which I fancy is an imitation of no fly that ever floated, seems to have its principal attraction in the colour of its tail. That was the fly that was most alluring to the grayling. The only little drawback to this delightful day was that for the greater part of it a blustering south-westerly wind prevailed, which was dead against us; but it calmed down as the shades of evening came on, and then was the time for execution. Altogether it was one of those ideal days that one often imagines but very seldom realizes.

By the way, with reference to the often quoted sneer that angling is "an amusement with a stick and a string; a worm at one end

a fool at the other," Sir Humphry Davy accepts it as originating with Dr. Johnson; but he says: "The true adage should be 'A fly at one end and a philosopher at the other.'" It has been repeatedly shown not only that no such expression is to be found anywhere in Dr. Johnson's works, but that it was originated by a Frenchman fifty years before Dr. Johnson's time.

The following extract from "Salmonia" may appropriately come in here:

"Dr. Paley was evidently attached to this amusement—so much so that when the Bishop of Durham inquired of him when one of his most important works would be finished, he said, 'My lord, I shall work steadily at it when the fly-fishing season is over.'"

CHAPTER V

ON THE WYE

A MORNING DRIVE—AN OLD MAN'S ANECDOTES—AN EVENING WALK ON GOOD FRIDAY BY THE SIDE OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE WYE

"In a great river great fish are found;
But take heed lest you be drowned."
G. HERBERT.

April 5th, 1902.

AT last we have managed to hoist the dear old boy into the trap. He had added two steps to help himself up, the lowest being within eight inches of the ground. With the aid of his wife and the groom we got him to lift his right foot on to the lower step and his left foot on to the next, and so on till he was safely landed in a comfortable seat, well wrapped up; and off we started for a six-mile drive on this lovely

morning—lovely, but with a keenish north-westerly wind in our faces. This was the first time he had been out for some weeks, and the warm and keen air brightened him up surprisingly.

The country was quite new to me, not far from the Wye, to our left, as we drove along the Hay road. He soon became chatty and garrulous; he told me about the beautiful country we were driving through, the owners of the estates, the tenants, their holdings and the rent they paid, and various stories about the men themselves. Then, when he had exhausted that subject, he told me of the terrible snowstorm tragedy they had last December on the Montgomery side of the county. He knew the two young men well, the one nineteen and unmarried, the other twenty-three and married; they had been to an auction with his own man, and returned home by train; landed at a station on the railway towards Llandrindod, and then started to walk over a mountain to their homes—it was dark, and the snow was falling fast; they lost their way and wandered about. There was no anxiety felt at either of their homes, which were not far apart—the parents thinking they may have reached the son's house safely,

and the son's wife was satisfied that they must have found shelter at the father's house. But when morning came and they were not found at either place the anxiety became intense. The mountain was deep in snow, which continued to fall. The country was roused—search parties set out, and for two or three days no trace of the unhappy young men could be found. At length, I think after three days' search, the bodies of the brothers were found under three feet of snow, within two hundred yards of their father's house, locked in each other's arms, the elder having taken off his own overcoat and wrapped it round his young brother. It must have been a touching sight, and was indeed a very terrible tragedy. It seems to have been truly as fine an example of unselfish heroism on the part of this good brother, and as worthy of the D.S.O. as if shown on the field of battle. The story, he said, was told in all the local papers, but I had not read of it before.

His bailiff, who had attended the funeral, was driving home in a snowstorm when suddenly a large limb of an elm tree, heavily laden with snow, fell without any warning across the road just in front of his horse, which was, of course,

terribly startled, reared straight up, and bolted; he managed to keep his seat and hold on. The horse was eventually quieted down, and with the help of a passer-by got past the tree, and he reached home safely. That was a most providential escape from another tragedy. And so we passed the time on our drive, the old man, who is many years my junior, spinning his continuous yarns till we got back in time for luncheon. It was a glorious morning, and the drive had done him good.

An Evening Walk.

Good Friday down here, on the Welsh border, was as lovely a day as could be desired. It was just perfect for a stroll—the wind had toned down to a pleasant breeze, the sun was shining brilliantly, and all Nature seemed to be waking up from its long winter's sleep. I am staying within a mile of the river Wye, but not on fishing bent—it is too early for me; besides, there is nothing but pike to be looked for yet. I turned off the turnpike road to the right and trespassed southward across a hundred acre pathless meadow in search of the river, for I wanted to see how it looked at this season. I had long since made

its acquaintance some miles lower down, but here, and on this side, all was new to me. After a walk of a mile or so across the meadows, I came suddenly on its banks, and to me, just emerging from the fogs and disagreeables of London, this noble river presented an unspeakably pleasant sight—a broad, silver sheet flowing, ever-flowing slowly, and in almost absolute silence, for it scarcely ever uttered a sound. It is here about a hundred yards wide, as nearly as I could guess, and was at its full, without any indication of overflow. It may be said of the Wye as Sir John Denham said of the Thames:

"Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage; without o'erflowing full."

I was quite fascinated by the beauty of it all—a broad silver sunlit stream flowing seaward in one unbroken, noiseless mass—majestic, irresistible, an aristocratic stream, too dignified to notice any small or minor obstacles to its course. I followed it up for a mile, and could see its winding course through the green meadows for another mile or two. Everything was silent—no fish moving in its waters, no fly on its sur-

face, no bird on its bushy banks. There are salmon in plenty doubtless, and plenty of pike and perch, and the usual run of coarse fish, but of trout there are very few. It is not the sort of stream that I should care to waste my time by fly-fishing it. It is said to be partly preserved, but there are no water-bailiffs hereabouts, and anybody can fish who pleases without much fear of being interfered with. Those who do fish, I presume, are the local knowing ones, who fix themselves in cosy corners and fish for perch where they know they are to be found.

After starting, a pair of twin-sisters, in "Gloomy Plinlimmon," and wandering through many a county far apart, the Wye and Severn meet again Chepstow way, to be absorbed in the "Severn Sea."

I was curious to estimate roughly the speed of this lordly river hereabouts. It seemed to me that the great mass of water moved, like a stream of molten silver, at the rate of, say, three miles an hour, and as I take it to be about forty miles to its junction with the Severn, the water passing me now will not get into the sea for probably twenty hours from this time. I

remember once standing on the banks of the Nile at Cairo with Sir H. M. Stanley.

"Look," said he, "that water passing us now in all probability I saw at the sources of the Nile six months ago. It has travelled ten or twelve thousand miles (I forget the exact length), and at its average rate it would take six months to come from there here. It has been travelling steadily along its own course, whilst it has taken me just as long to get here; so here again I meet the same water that first greeted me in the Mountains of the Moon."

I set out in the hope of meeting with some incident worth mentioning; in that I have been disappointed, but I do assure you that many years have passed since I have had such an ideal day for an afternoon's ramble, or a ramble in scenery more pleasant and picturesque than I have had on this Good Friday of the year of grace 1902.

CHAPTER VI

ON THE WYE

A COMIC AND A TRAGIC STORY—CHUB-FISHING—A VISIT TO DORSTONE AND THE DORE IN THE "GOLDEN VALLEY"

"I'm off at eight to-morrow morn,
To bring *such* fishes back!"
C. KINGSLEY.

July 19*th*, 1902.

JUST as "in youth a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love," so does an old man's fancy with more of wisdom, as he thinks, bred from experience, turn to fishing. I am on the side of the ancients.

I find myself once again in the neighbourhood of the Wye, and in company of the dear old man, who is as great a cripple, but as full of cheery anecdotes as ever. I will give you

one or two samples, deprived of much of their raciness in the telling. His stories are generally of a tragic character, but here is one which has something of the comic element. A neighbour farmer had come home from market late at night, and jolly as usual, to put it mildly. Sitting over the fire he soon fell asleep, and managed to drop his beautiful set of false teeth into the ashes. Next morning the housemaid in raking out the grate found these teeth, and, horrified at the sight, she rushed upstairs, screaming, "Oh Missis! Missis! the master's fell in the fire and is burnt to ashes, and there's nothing left but his teeth, and here they be! Oh, oh!"

Another over-true tragic story was that of an acquaintance of his in his youthful days, about the time when the Rebeccaites were going about destroying turnpike gates. A gay young spark had been at a hunt meet, and, riding a splendid colt, came up to a turnpike gate—three sheets in the wind. He insisted on having the gate opened at once. The old woman refused till the gate-money was paid. He swore he wouldn't pay; if he couldn't pass through the gate, he'd go over it. He turned round, backed his horse for a short distance, and made a dash

at the gate. The horse cleared it grandly, but caught the hoof of the off hind leg in an iron bar that covered one end of the top of the gate, and the poor brute came down on his head, and was killed on the spot. The youth was taken up insensible, and is still living, a highly respected old gentleman.

Another and extraordinary thing happened only a few months ago to an old friend of his. He was breaking a splendid young cart-house to work in the team. The horse was being hooked on to the team at plough in a field; something startled him, and he bolted just as they were hooking the traces. The farmer was knocked down, and the traces somehow caught round his foot, and by an extraordinary chance got firmly hooked.

The horse broke off at full gallop, dragging the man by the one leg. Somehow he managed to get the free leg over the other as the horse dashed through a hedge, and then, by a still more remarkable chance, the other trace got hooked to the one round the foot, and so providentially both legs were kept together; so it happened that the horse, still at full gallop, took two more fences and came into the turn-

pike road with the poor fellow still dragging behind him. After a further gallop for some distance along the turnpike road, he was stopped by two men. The farmer was insensible, his clothes were completely torn from his back, and the flesh from his bones the whole length of his back, as pitiable a sight as ever was seen. He was conveyed to a hospital, and there the last reports are that he is doing well—for this occurred only a few months ago. I ventured to express some doubt as to the strict accuracy of the dash through the hedges. "Pooh!" said he, "it is clear you never saw a great, mad, young cart-horse. What is a fence to him? This story is not romance, but an incident as true as it seems incredible."

It is time that I betake myself to the water. I find the distance across the meadows much longer than I thought when I walked the same way last Easter, for now the heat is intense. When I last saw the river it was brimful, a grand sweeping stream, strong, irresistible; now I find it like other and smaller rivers, at some places easily fordable. Unhappily, in the stretch of a mile or two to which I have access there are no trout. Here and there in the shadow of

the bushes chub are sometimes to be seen. Chub I despise. Perch there are, doubtless, but they will not rise to the fly as a rule, though I have seen them caught so. To fish for chub Izaak Walton advises me to "get two or three grasshoppers as you go over the meadow, and get secretly behind the tree and stand as free from motion as is possible, then put a grasshopper on your hook, and let your hook hang a quarter of a yard short of the water. But it is likely the chub will sink down towards the bottom of the water at the first shadow of your rod . . . but they will presently rise up again . . . then move your rod as softly as a snail moves over the chub you intend to catch, and let your bait fall gently on the water . . . and he will infallibly like it."

All this is very true. I accordingly, in crossing the meadows, looked out for some hoppers, but I failed to find any. I fell back on an artificial thing, double-hooked, long hairy body like a caterpillar, and a gold-striped body. I found a place where the river swirled round, forming a smooth little lake underneath a spreading willow and other bushes; but there was no move or anything like a rise. I hooked

and landed a decent chub, and then another. I despise that sort of fishing, and there was no chance of any other here, so I gave it up.

Salmon there are, no doubt, but I have no licence, no tackle, no skill in that direction. This stretch of the river needs to be looked after by the Conservancy Board; it is not my business to look after it or them. I only know that my boy tells me he is very fond of fishing, but that the fishing he has seen has been with the net, not with the rod. One day he was out fishing with the keepers of a certain riparian owner when they brought out over a score of splendid salmon weighing over 20 lb. each. "That," says he, "is the sort of sport I like." "That," said I, "is rank poaching, and should be put a stop to." I am inclined to think that it was owing to this great event that the attention of the Conservancy was aroused to the netting question, and now netting is no longer permitted, or at least is suspended for five years.

Finding no attraction in the big river for my small efforts, I am now looking out for some less ambitious but more trouty stream. I had been told of a small stream in the "Golden Valley" called the Dore, and thither to-day I went in

search. It is twelve miles from here to the nearest station—that of Dorstone. I was impelled to make this village my stopping-place for two reasons.

The first is that it is just *seventy years* since I saw it for the first and last time, and I wanted to test my memory as to whether anything would be recalled by a visit there. In the summer of 1833 my father resided some five and twenty miles away from this village. At that time I was a nice little chap of eight years, and my father was pleased to take me with him on a visit to an old uncle who resided in the neighbourhood of Dorstone. He rode a big brown mare, and I a small black pony.

It was a long and memorable ride for me, and I can recall little of it except crossing the big river Wye, the biggest I had ever seen. The crossing must have been at Bredwardine Bridge, and I remembered having afterwards to climb some very rough hills. This little old uncle of my father's must have been then about eighty years of age, and if living now (but I rather think he is dead), would be about 150 years old. I remember him as a bright, rosy-faced cheery little man, right glad to see us and make us

welcome. I remember his features and style of chirping about, and also his son Andrew, a youth of about twenty, who inspired me with great awe, for he was a born musician and clever mechanician; he had made himself a violin, and could play on it most divinely. I could not on this renewed visit recall the residence, which was somewhere outside the village, but a tall pillar of granite, which was surmounted by an ancient sundial, and situated on a mound in the middle of the village, seemed to remind me that I had seen it before in the ancient days.

My second reason for coming to see Dorstone was on account of the fishing. The river Dore takes its source in the Golden Well, in this parish, in which tradition says a fish was caught with a golden ring in its gill. It seems that I commenced at the wrong end of the "river"; further down beyond Peterchurch and away off to Abbeydore it appears to justify its title of being a "famous trout stream," but here at Dorstone it is not three yards wide. I had asked a charming young lady whom I met near the church where the *river* was. She took me across the road. "There," said she, "is

the river Dore." "Where?" said I. "I see no river!" But there it was under my nose—discoloured by cattle above cooling their feet in the drop of water to be found in it. Notwithstanding this despicable beginning of things, my young lady informant told me there were plenty of trout lower down, especially in the May Fly time. She herself, and her sister, and her father, and her brother were all enthusiastic anglers, and did wonders sometimes. "But, mind you, it is a very difficult little river to fish," said she; and I believe her. Presumably it is from the legend of the "golden ring" that the valley takes its pretty name. But I have a distinct recollection of asking my father, as we were riding up the hill, why it was called "The Golden Valley." We stopped on the ridge. "Look down there, my boy," said he, "at the rich crops of wheat and barley and oats, and the grand meadows; it is because of the rich quality of the land producing these fine crops that this beautiful valley is called 'The Golden.'" That is another interpretation of its title; it quite satisfied me then, and the glimpse I have now had of it fully justifies the title. But as I have said, the part I have seen to-day

has no claim to bring me back for fishing purposes.

Up to this point, therefore, I have no fishing exploits to chronicle. I have heard of other places where trout are said to abound, but they are far away. If I can reach them I may have other adventures to record.

CHAPTER VII

HUNTING FOR FISHING

FISHING IN A WYE PRESERVE—FINGERLING FISHING—AT THE THREE COCKS—START FOR A LOVELY TROUT AND GRAYLING RIVER; BRIGHT HOPES—UNLOOKED-FOR DISAPPOINTMENT

"Still fisheth he that catcheth one."
Jacula Prudentum.

July, 1902.

DURING my short vacation I may truly be said to have had some splendid hunting—for fishing—and it has not been for want of activity on my part that my hunting has, in one sense, been a failure, though it has afforded me pleasant occupation. It so happens that my headquarters are situated many miles away from the abode of trout or grayling.

I told you in my last of my twenty-mile journey to Dorstone in search of the prill[1] called the Dore. Since then permission was given me to fish in a strictly preserved part of the Wye said to contain good trout quarters. Jack and I accordingly took a six-mile drive there one Friday. We arrived in a downpour of rain, and it continued while I hopelessly flogged the likely quarters; but I saw no sign of fish of any kind except three splendid salmon turning somersaults. They seemed to me to be about a yard long each, but of course the glimpse was momentary. My permission to fish specially excluded salmon-fishing; but, dear me, what a model place it was to practise casting a salmon fly—a long and broad deep pool, sweeping round an open gravel beach, no obstruction whatever. It looked so easy to cast over and hook one of those big fellows and simply haul him out on to the gravelly bed, but it was not for me to do.

The scenery round and about the bright river was enchanting, and in spite of the fact that I caught nothing—for there was nothing to catch—and I got a good wetting, I could find no

[1] Prill is a local term for a very small stream.—A. A.

fault with my little excursion; indeed, I enjoyed it immensely. Fleet Street and its grim realities never once obtruded upon and marred the fair scenes about me.

One day I was waiting for ten minutes at a station close to the river; down there was a tall, white-bearded old gentleman in long black waders fly-fishing for what? I had been told that trout were there and were caught in any quantities. I saw this old fellow catch a fish five inches long, and I expected to see him put it back—not a bit of it; it went into his bag, and then another and another, and so the game was going on till my train left. What was he pocketing? Why, young salmon—fingerlings, samlets, or whatever they may be called. I had myself caught many of these little chaps, which I regarded as a nuisance and threw them back. I am told these samlets make a delicious fry; but is it legal to bag them?

On another occasion we painfully lifted our good old invalid into his pony-trap, and I took him for a long drive through the pleasant roads and lanes of the neighbourhood; it afforded us an opportunity of almost realizing one of his own tragic stories. I was driving leisurely up

a rather narrow road, and we were having a pleasant chat, when all of a sudden there came dashing round a sharp corner, and without warning of sight or hearing (and, according to my version, at the rate of sixteen miles an hour), a fine young gentleman of the new school, with his groom beside him, driving a spanking horse, and smash he came into our modest dogcart, quite unprepared for the encounter. He struck the cap of our axle, snapped our off-spring, and otherwise seriously injured our trap, not without, I may, perhaps, maliciously say, with some gratification, considerable damage to his own vehicle. The wonder was that our trap, being much the lightest, was not upset, and the "Amateur Angler" and his friend seriously maimed, or, indeed, one or both of us killed. Fortunately, much the lightest weight was on the near side, or the trap had inevitably gone over. As it was, we abused each other in the road with as much eloquence as each of us could suddenly muster, he vowing that I was not on my own side, and that his pace was not eight miles an hour, and I stoutly asserting that his pace was at least sixteen miles, while I was quietly driving in the middle of the road, and

not for one moment admitting that he had the right to kill me even if I had been a trifle out of the exact centre of the narrow road. And so, each one quite convinced that the other was in the wrong, he backed up by his groom, and I by my invalid, we started on our several ways—we with a broken spring, and he, I am sure, with a saddened conscience, for he seemed to be a gentleman. Subsequently he did me the honour of calling upon me, but I was not at home. I am told on all hands that he is a very pleasant, genial young gentleman, but it must be owned that the way we met was not conducive to geniality or good temper.

Another day—in pursuit of the game of fishing—found me away up in Breconshire at a place called The Three Cocks, a well-known junction of the Midland and Cambrian Railways. Here I was told was some grand trout-fishing to be had. I inquired wherever I could, but could only learn that whatever fishing there was was strictly preserved. I found a lovely little stream running a meadow or two below the station; the name, I think, is the Llunvy, or as one called it, Aberlunvy. This I was told was a good trout stream. The part I examined for

half an hour seemed to be swarming with chub, great big fellows, soaring, as Izaak Walton says, on the top of the water. I longed to be at them, though I love them not.

The Three Cocks is an old-fashioned inn half a mile from the station, and musing, as I strolled along the turnpike road towards it, on the oddness of the title, I came upon the very handsome lodge and grand iron gate entrance to a deer park. On the granite pillars were the family arms rather rudely sculptured; on the central shield were a stag and two bulls, and on the lower sinister panel were *three superb cocks*, the motto underneath being *Taurus gaudet in silvis*. Of course in these family arms will be found the origin of the title given to the old inn and the new railway station.

Again I was told of a lovely trout and grayling river twelve miles away, where fishing was free and any amount of trout to be had for the catching. On Monday, July 21st, a bitterly cold east-winderly day, we took this long drive, and in an hour and a half we reached the Red Lion.

The landlord was in ecstasies, vowed the river was swarming with rising trout, and we

started off to look at it. Looking over the parapet of the bridge I saw a fish rise close under the bank, and lower down many others rise in quick succession. "I'll have that fish to-morrow," said I to Jack, "be he trout or grayling." This being only an exploring expedition we foolishly left our tackle behind us. Where these fish were rising happened to be just the head of a strictly preserved bit of water. Satisfied we were, however, that we had at last found a splendid trout stream; we returned to the inn, had a famous lunch of bread and cheese and beer—not a chop to be had without sending three or four miles to the neighbouring town. We vowed, in spite of wind or weather, to be there with all our destructive implements, and we ordered dinner to be ready at one o'clock next day to the minute; our plucky little mare brought us safely home after a twenty-four miles' round, quite unconscious that she had got the same work to do next day.

Punctual to the minute, however, we next day reached the Red Lion. Dinner was on the table in no time—a dinner, I assure you, which none of your royal anglers would have scorned. The landlady of this little roadside inn apolo-

gized for not being able to serve us quite in the royal style, but she gave us a lovely little spring chicken, beautifully browned and cooked to a turn, delicious gravy and egg sauce to match, and the dish garnished with the sweetest little bits of frizzled bacon that ever were eaten, and the accompaniments were a dish of tender green peas and new potatoes—not the watery things you get in a grand London restauraut, but really firm yet tender juveniles. What more? Champagne had never demoralized the Red Lion, and the wines of France and Germany, of Spain and Portugal were unknown. Cider they had, and I am obliged to say that it was the only drawback to our feast; it was very hard and rough, I may say sour, and this our good landlady was quite aware of and deplored. I suggested the addition of a spoonful of whisky to tone down its acerbity; but she suggested gin as the best corrective, so gin in our cider we had, and it certainly made the cider drinkable.

Now, hurrah! for the river, and the enthusiastic landlord begged to be allowed to come along and see our grand doings and to put us up to all manner of dodges. Down we came to that bridge, and there was that identical trout

or grayling still rising in precisely the same spot. Conscious as I was that I was poaching on preserved waters, I threw my fly over him. Yet, was I poaching? I was on the turnpike road, and I made my cast over the stile. Anyhow, the fish came at me at once, and, as some of your anglers say, "attached" himself to my betrayer. Jack landed him on the footpath. Was he poaching? I take to myself the benefit of the doubt, and wouldn't mind doing the same thing again; he was a pretty grayling, say, ½ lb.

Thus, happy omen! I had caught a fish at my first cast. Our landlord was crazy with joy, and foretold the grand baskets we should make when we got up to the unpreserved water. I may say, in passing, that, strictly speaking, there is no unpreserved water here, for the water we are now about to invade belongs to a *club*, and there were notice boards up all along warning *trespassers*, with *penalties*, by *order*, and so on. But we were told by the farmers who held the land that they looked on the *club* as of no account, for they had been paid no rent for years, and they were not likely to get any; so they gave us permission to fish, on the condition that we and they should "share and share alike," with the result——

Well, well, I am sorry, I may say grieved, to tell you that our glorious anticipations were doomed to disappointment. After a laborious pursuit of the ins and outs of that winding and bewildering bush-surrounded stream, that one little grayling remained the sole occupant of our basket. We did not share him with the farmers; we brought him home whole, and I had him for breakfast the next morning, and sweet and tender he was. Now why did we catch no fish? There are plenty of trout there, and good ones.

"Well," as our landlord said, "you never know, when you go a-fishing, what may happen. When I was a boy I've gone many a time to the river and caught a dozen big trout of an evening with a worm, under an old stump, while you fly-fishers couldn't catch one." He added, "There is a neighbour of mine, he is one of the best anglers in the county. I saw him pull nine tremendous big fellows out of one hole not long ago. Why, yonder he is!" An elderly gentleman was sitting under a large willow on the other side of the river, and when I happened to catch sight of him he was holding a big black bottle up to his mouth, as if he was sucking something out of it. I know not what it was, but he seemed

to be very happy. "What luck?" cried our landlord with a great shout, for the old boy is very deaf. "Luck!" says he. "I've fished this river all my life and never had such a time before. Not a single fish have I got, though I have been here for hours. I wish I hadna come." "Why, look just above you," cried I; "there's a fine fish rising, just a pretty cast from you." "Ay, I know him," says he; "that fish ain't a-goin' to fool me. You have a go at him. But what's the use of throwing a fly over a fish like that, with the sun a-shinin' on him and the water as clear as gin? You try him."

Well, now, if this old boy couldn't catch a trout in what one may call his native stream, why should we strangers be disappointed? "Ah!" said our landlord, "if you had but been here yesterday—they were rising all along the river, great big fellows. I never saw anything like it, and very likely it'll be the same to-morrow. Come and have another go at 'em." "Thank you," I said, "not to-morrow, but some other time in the far distant future we may turn up again precisely at 1 p.m., and you have that chicken and peas, new potatoes and egg sauce all ready, will you?" "All right," said our landlord.

CHAPTER VIII

A DAY ON THE LEA

SKETCH OF THE LEA FROM ITS SOURCE TO ITS MOUTH —IZAAK WALTON AT THATCHT-HOUSE AND HODDESDON—DR. JOHNSON AT LUTON HOO—PANSHANGER OAK—BLEAK HALL—POLLUTION OF THE RIVER—OUR DAY'S FISHING

"No life so happy and so pleasant as the life of a well-governed angler; for when the lawyer is swallowed up with business, and the statesman is preventing or contriving plots, then we sit on cowslip banks, hear the birds sing, and possess ourselves in as much quietness as these silent silver streams which we now see glide so quietly by us."—IZAAK WALTON.

AND only a day; my first acquaintance with that renowned stream. I have been trying to trace on an ordnance map the course of the Lea from its mouth at Blackwall, where it joins the Thames. From this point to its source I

can claim no personal acquaintance with it beyond the mile or two in which I fished on Bank Holiday. Apart from fishing it must in its pellucid days—say in Izaak Walton's time—have been a most interesting river to explore. Between Barking Creek and Lea Bridge, following it upwards or backwards, the river seems to have three or four arms or branches; then becoming one stream it forms the boundary line between Middlesex and Essex up to Waltham Abbey; thence past Broxbourne to Roydon, where it separates Hertfordshire and Essex. From Roydon it makes a plunge into the very heart of Hertfordshire (only it plunges the other way). There the names of places most noted on its route are Ware and Hertford, between which towns it receives the waters of the Rib and the Beane, and a little westward of Hertford the river Mimram, or rather the little that is left of it by the water company, flows into it. From Hatfield we pursue it to Hide Mill and to Luton in Bedfordshire, and so tracing it to Houghton Regis I lose sight of it altogether. I presume it is thereabouts that it takes its rise.

Besides its beautiful scenery, and its many

Photo by] [*Dr. P. H. Emerson.*

WARE, HERTS.

attractions for London anglers and boating men, the river Lea has (or rather had in the days of its purity) an almost unique claim on the affection of millions of the dwellers in the great city. Early in the seventeenth century Sir Hugh Myddelton, that worthy benefactor, expended his time, his money, and his indefatigable energies in creating the New River, and so drawing water by an artificial canal of about thirty-eight miles from the Chadwell and Amwell springs, near Ware, to a great reservoir at Clerkenwell. King James joined him in the enterprise, on the condition of finding half the capital and taking half the profits. Sir Hugh lived to see the fruition of his grand scheme, but he did not live long enough to receive any dividends from his invested capital. He died in embarrassed circumstances; those unproductive shares are now worth many millions. In after times the channel was widened and deepened, the distance shortened, and the river Lea has long contributed its share to swell the great reservoirs which surround the north-east of London. As a grateful consumer of its water, when analyzed and filtered, and contributor to water rates which a fabulously wealthy company

demands, I was delighted with the opportunity of testing it from an angler's standpoint, and, if possible, tasting its trout.

Having thus traced the Lea up to its source at Houghton Regis by the help of an ordnance map, I will now make a rapid descent, touching only a few places here and there which I find noted in "Rambles by Rivers," by James Thorne. From him I learn that the Lea rises at Houghton Regis, about a mile and a half north-east of Dunstable, in Bedfordshire, and entering Hertfordshire near Hide Mill proceeds in a south-easterly direction through Wheathampstead and Hatfield Park. At Luton, though it appears to be a very interesting little town, we can only stop to say that Dr. Johnson once visited Luton Hoo, and it was in the grounds there that Boswell proposed that he should walk. He replied:

"Don't let us fatigue ourselves. *Why should we walk there?* Here's a tree; let us get to the top of it."

A short distance from Hertford the Lea is joined by the lovely little stream which Thorne calls "The Maran"—I know not which is the right title, this or Mimram.

Panshanger Park is, or was, renowned for a *famous Oak*. According to Arthur Young, in his "Survey of Herts," it was called the *Great Oak* in 1709. Strutt, in his "Silva Britannica," fol., 1822, says it contains one thousand feet of timber, and is nineteen feet in circumference at a yard from the ground. The trunk rises

PANSHANGER OAK.

from its roots with a graceful curve, and the main branches separate from it in a regular, yet varied but free manner. When clothed in the full luxuriance of its foliage, nothing in the shape of a tree can surpass the harmonious grandeur of its appearance. Here is an engraving of it reduced from Mr. Thorne's book.

I hope some one who reads the above account

will be able to tell me that this grand tree still flourishes in the twentieth century.

Between Hertford and Ware is the Chadwell Spring, the source of the New River. The little picture of it given below is taken from Mr. Thorne's book.

What is of more interest to me and to my

[Chadswell Springs.]

CHADSWELL SPRING AS IT APPEARED IN 1844.

readers is the fact that the banks of the river Lea between Tottenham and Ware were the scenes of that inimitable book, "The Complete Angler," by Izaak Walton. It was indeed in pursuit of any scrap of information about Izaak Walton that I started on this literary pilgrimage down the river. I find a long dissertation on the character of the man, but not much about

Photo by] [*Dr. P. H. Emerson.*

THE OCTOBER HOLE, NEAR HODDESDON, ON THE LEA.

his angling doings. It was under a honeysuckle hedge on the banks of the Lea that he talked to his scholar of the pleasures he had there found.

"Look, under that broad beach-tree, I sat down when I was last this way a-fishing and the birds in the adjoining grove seemed to have a friendly contention with an echo, whose dead voice seemed to live in a hollow tree, near to the brow of that primrose hill: there I sat viewing the silver streams glide silently towards their centre, the tempestuous sea; yet sometimes opposed by rugged roots and pebble stones, which broke their waves and turned them into foam; and sometimes I beguiled time by viewing the harmless lambs, some leaping securely in the cool shade, whilst others sported themselves in the cheerful sun; and saw others craving comfort from the swollen udders of their bleating dams. As I thus sat these and other sights had so fully possessed my soul with content, that I thought, as the poet has happily expressed it—

> I was for that time lifted above earth,
> And possess'd joys not promised in my birth.'"

Presently we come to Hoddesdon, where was the "Thatcht-House," where "Venator" proposed to "drink his morning draft." "A cottage at the northern extremity of the town is pointed

out as the original, but it is doubtful," says Thorne, and if doubtful then it must be more so now.

Broxbourne is the next place which may detain us for a minute. Want's Inn is, or was in

THATCHED HOUSE.

Thorne's time, much frequented by London anglers. Passing Wormley and Cheshunt we reach Waltham Cross, erected by Edward I. to the memory of his consort Eleanor. It is of great beauty. We soon reach Edmonton, in whose churchyard lie the remains of Charles

Lamb. It was at Edmonton that John Gilpin and his wife should have dined. A painting of Gilpin's ride is fixed outside a public house in the town, and the house is commonly known as "Gilpin's Bell"; it is not "the Bell at Edmonton" at which the Gilpin family were to

BLEAK HALL.

dine, but it is the house which was much frequented by Charles Lamb.

About a mile from Edmonton, by the Lea side, stands Bleak Hall, the house to which "Piscator" took his scholar "Venator," and which was then "an honest alehouse where might be found a cleanly room, lavendar in the windows,

and twenty ballads stuck about the wall; with a hostess both cleanly and handsome and civil." The old house must have long since disappeared, for it was nearly all gone seventy years ago.

After this very slight sketch of the Lea it is time that I get back to my "Day's Fishing."

It was at a point somewhere between Houghton Regis and Barking Creek that we—the Major and I—were favoured by the permission to fish a mile or two of highly preserved and most charmingly situated bit of the Lea river. It is needless to localize it more precisely. We had a lovely day—that is, for our purpose—heavy black, leaden clouds lowered above our heads in the morning, occasional bits of blue sky and sunshine, and sometimes a slight shower through the day furnished pleasant variety.

Here the river is narrow and runs rather deep in places, for our quarters are above and beyond the points where the Lea receives the important tributaries I have mentioned. Here it may be called a pretty little stream meandering through pleasant meadows quite innocent of the smells from the sewage which, according to the recent ghastly report in "The Fishing Gazette," is poured into it in the neighbourhood of Hertford

Photo by] [*Dr. P. H. Emerson.*

THE CROWN INN, BROXBOURNE.

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and Ware. At the present moment the water is very low, and perhaps does not convey to one the true spirit of it, when a few days of up-hill rain have served to give it enlivenment. It has been basking in the sun too long, and even the fish are beginning to sweat and to cry with the youthful poet,

"Hang it, how hot we shall be!"

There are plenty of trout here; the water is, on the whole, and in ordinary times, easily approachable, the river fishable, and the trout run to big weights. But—there is always a but when I go a-fishing—you cannot just now possibly get at them! The banks on either side were rife with the lusty growth of tall weeds and bushes, through which one could not penetrate with any degree of satisfaction. Of course there are a few gaps here and there, and it can be understood that to cast over a hedge of weeds above your head into a stream only five or six yards wide, overhung by a like hedge opposite, is not a thing to be easily accomplished; but these long grassy hedges, which are mostly but temporary, were nothing to be objurgated upon compared with the state of the water itself.

I did *not* rain down blessings on the head of that keeper for allowing the very prolific weeds to form a solid massive covering for the water, doubtless a pleasant protection for the trout from the perpendicular rays of the sun; but it is rather grievous to have to say it also proved to be a very effective protection for him from the bifurcated prowlers on the banks. It was aggravating, because the trout were there, the "A. A." was there, and the Major was there; and we should certainly have become acquainted with many more of them than we did but for these various hindrances.

I am aware that I am scarcely worthy to be called an angler, for I confine my efforts to fly-fishing. This river is in a good state for bottom fishing. If I knew how to fish with a worm here I might do much execution, but I am wanting in patience and experience, and a worm reminds me of Hamlet's taunting reply to the King:

"A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm."

And in that way he sardonically adds:

"A King may go a progress through the guts of a beggar."

The Major soon became tired of "this sort of thing"—gave it up, and betook himself to the solace of a pipe and the contemplation of the beauties of nature under a spreading willow; but I, the "A. A.," having a character to maintain—or I ought to say retrieve, for I have been monstrously unlucky lately—persevered. I walked, and worked, and watched, and where I could find a few yards of open space, and could see even the scintillation of the movement of a trout's fin, or the wagging of his tail, down I came upon him in my usual pretty style, and oftentimes I attracted his attention. Indeed, of tail-wagging I saw a great deal too much. It is useless to cast your fly over a trout when his tail is above water and his head down in the mud; he cannot see with his tail. Yet this was the way those big trout were amusing themselves all that blessed afternoon.

Now I come to think of it, I am afraid what I have just been writing savours very much of a continuous growl or grumble, but I mean nothing of the kind. I beg to assure the good provider of this pleasant feast that I enjoyed it

most thoroughly, and really I did not fare so badly after all. I had some luck, and I know that I deserved better. I had some psychological moments of supreme satisfaction, for I had hold of several fine trout, and of one monster. I placed my fly very daintily just above him in a most difficult place. He came at me with a dash, and was off like a young motor-car. We hugged each other for a long time, and there were moments when I made sure of him, and in those few moments there passed through my excited brain the whole process of hooking him, landing him, cooking him, or showing him triumphantly to my friends. I had not quite decided in my own mind whether we should cook and eat him or send him to be set up, and then present him to the Fly Fishers' Club as a sample of the A. A.'s prowess. He was all but in my net, when it occurred to him how foolish it would look to be stuck up in that fashion. He made another dash for life and liberty, and my hook came away from his lips. He was not far short of three pounds. Sorry for the F. F. Club!

He was not the only trout that day that raised my hopes to the skies and then dashed them down to the depths; but do not suppose my

"attachments" were all failures. By no means. I consider that I succeeded fairly well—bearing in mind the obstacles in the way; but for these I modestly estimate that I should have carried away at least six brace of pounders in my own creel, whereas—speaking the truth, as I always do—we had to content ourselves with five brace of nice trout between us, say from half a pound to a pound each.

I am inclined to think that there were no such things as weeds in rivers in the days of Izaak Walton. I wonder how far it may be from the foot of Chancery Lane to Hoddesdon or Ware, and I wonder who amongst us in these degenerate days would, like Walton, think nothing of starting afoot "on a fine fresh *May day* in the morning" on that long journey, carrying a load of the needful fishing implements, and breakfast off a Lea trout and a cup of ale at "the thatcht-house," Hoddesdon, by nine o'clock. Surely there were no weeds to trouble him then. I do not remember that his admirable patience was ever put to the test of a river full up with weeds. I fancy they are a later invention of the enemy.

By the way, I wonder if Izaak Walton and

Samuel Pepys ever foregathered. Can any reader tell me? I was by chance reading Pepys the other day when I came upon this passage:

"Swallows are often brought in these nets out of the mudd, from under water, hanging together or others dead in ropes, and brought to the fire will come to life."—*Pepys' Diary*, Dec. 11th, 1663.

Izaak Walton says:

"It is well known that swallowes, which are not seen to flye in England for six months in the year, but about Michaelmas leave us for a hotter climate; yet some of them that have been left behind their fellows have been found (many thousand at a time) in hollow trees, where they have been observed to live and sleep out the whole winter without meat."

One might easily fancy they had talked it over.

Gilbert White, a hundred years later, does not contradict this theory of the hibernation of swallows.[1]

It struck me as at least curious that these three very remarkable men should roundly assert

[1] Mr. Grant Allen, in his edition of "White's Selborne," says that "White could never quite get over the belief in hibernation, a point to which he recurs again and again throughout these letters."

as facts, more or less within their own knowledge, and certainly within their belief, what are now, by the light of modern investigations, regarded as purely mythical and incredible.

Whilst the Major and I devoted ourselves to the trout in the river—I with my usual enthusiasm, which towards evening resulted in rather shaky knees and very sore feet, and he with that philosophic calm which soon led him to the shady willow aforementioned—the young ones fished an adjoining lake with perfect satisfaction to themselves. Master Bob made friends with the keeper, and was initiated in the art of catching crayfish with a bit of bloater, and so we passed a very pleasant day, one which the youngsters will remember for years to come, and the older ones not readily forget.

It is not often that father, son, and grandson all fish together for trout with the fly, and all catch some.

CHAPTER IX

FISHING IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT

GRAND REVIEW AT SPITHEAD—CARISBROOKE FISHING ASSOCIATION—ABUNDANCE OF TROUT—FAIR SPORT—A DELIGHTFUL DAY—AND A DELUGE AT NIGHT

"Complete content—the day has brought it—
He fished for pleasure—and he caught it!"
H. J. Wise.

August, 1902.

THE Isle of Wight is probably the last place in Great Britain to which an angler on fishing bent would be likely to resort. I went there for other reasons, but being there I was pleased to find on inquiry that there is to be had some very good trout-fishing indeed.

I was on a visit to Piscator Major at Sandown, where he and his family were temporarily residing. Mine was only a week-end visit. On

Saturday, August 16th, his Majesty the King reviewed the ships at Spithead, and expressed his extreme satisfaction at the appearance of the ships and the ships' companies.

I had already passed through and reviewed them the day before, and expressed *my* "extreme satisfaction" as the result. That being so, it was from no unpatriotic or disloyal motive that I abstained from attending his Majesty's Review on the Saturday, as I have said I had already seen and blessed them.

I suppose it will be within the memory of a good many readers that on July 19th there appeared in "The Fishing Gazette" a short article entitled "Trout Fishing in the Isle of Wight," and that was really the secret cause of my apparent disloyalty. The Major, you may be sure, had an eye on this fishery when he took apartments in breezy, bracing Sandown—bracing, I mean, for the island, which in the month of August does not generally sustain that character. He had accordingly obtained further information from the courteous and energetic secretary of the Carisbrooke Fishing Association, Mr. Percy Wadham, who lives at Waltondale, Newport (the very name of his

residence is a proof that he is a disciple of Izaak Walton). We took an early train from Sandown on Saturday morning, and in due time we reached Newport, where Mr. Wadham met and escorted us to Pond No. 1. There are five mill-ponds, which are fed by the river Lukely, within the limits of the club's fishing rights. I should say that on this occasion I am bound by no pledge of secrecy, therefore I gladly give names and place of our day's outing.

Before we begin to fish it may be as well to say that the club is of a high-class character, that the number of members is limited to twenty, and the annual subscription *ten guineas*. The number of trout to be taken by one rod in a day is *two brace*. As regards these rules I will only remark that it seems to me that being bound down to two brace a day is not sufficiently encouraging. I should have thought four or five brace a day would have been more tempting to bring subscribers up to the full number.[1]

[1] The limit of two brace was fixed for this season as the fish have not long been put in. Mr. Wadham tells me that next year the limit will probably be four or five brace, and I am sure there will be no difficulty in getting rods. Last Tuesday (August 19th), fishing with Mr. E. M. Tod's new fly, I caught seven or eight brace of

I am aware that the expense already incurred, and still being continued, in scouring the lakes, in restocking them, and generally in keeping them to the high mark of efficiency which the active secretary aims at, is very great.

Up yonder is Carisbrooke Castle, and there is the window from which the good but unhappy King Charles more than two hundred and fifty years ago must often have looked down upon the Lukely and probably on our Pond No. 1. Truly, the Lukely, like other brooks, may sing as we poor mortals cannot:

> "Men may come and men may go,
> But I go on for ever."

Pond No. 1 is a very fine one, one-half of it surrounded by bushes and orchards, in the midst of which it is very difficult to cast, and here the trout were rising freely. It is full of big trout, and the day being very bright with only occasional breezes, and the water clear as crystal, they could be seen sailing about in large numbers. It is needless to say the accomplished Major soon reached his limit of two

very pretty fish in about three hours on a hot, bright day. I think the "A. A.'s" praise of the water is quite justified.—R. B. M.

brace, beyond which it is competent, of course, to go on fishing; but there is no fun for either fisherman or fish to catch and be caught only to throw or be thrown back; it is tantalizing to the fisherman, and unnecessary torture to the fish. I hooked several, but unfortunately failed to land one in this pond; that was rather my misfortune than my fault.

The second pond adjoins a renowned old inn, "The Eight Bells," a famous resort for the island excursionists in four-horse coaches. It is really a charming old place; at the back is a large bowling-green, which abuts on the lake, and *al fresco* luncheons are served under the trees for the excursionists. There is also an adjoining handsome dining-room, mainly reserved, as I was told, for anglers, and there we lunched. The weather was hot and sultry, so I lingered under the trees whilst the Major in a punt searched the lake from bottom to top without, as far as I could see, getting a single rise. One might have supposed that, like the usual crowd of visitors to the hotel, the fish had all gone off to the Review at Spithead. On such a day, but for the Review, I was told there would be eight or ten coach-loads of hungry

travellers. We had the place almost to ourselves.

Having settled Pond No. 2 we started off down the river for No. 3. There I got a brace of beautiful trout and lost a brace and a half. The Major, after catching a brace and putting them back regretfully, gave it up and looked on.

I began by saying that the secretary is a Waltonian. I now discovered that he combines in his own person the Waltonian qualifications and those of Gilbert White; he is a scientific naturalist, and when he invited us to tea at his pretty Waltondale, I found it to be a little museum of natural history. After the day's fatigue, Mrs. Wadham gave us a delightful tea down under the trees that overhang the Lukely. While this was going on the Major's nine-year-old boy Bob strolled a little way up the river, saw a rise, rushed back, seized his father's rod, made a beautiful cast over the trout, a big one too, hooked him, shouted for his father to bring the net, and there was a general skedaddle. Bob held on, got the fish up to the bank, and lost him. Never did I see the usually calm Major more excited or more disappointed. And so we passed a very pleasant day, and I will

only add about that Carisbrooke Fishing Club —I envy the members, and only wish I were one of them, which, alas, can never be, on account of distance, old age, and its attendant infirmities.

We reached Newport Station in time for the 7.45 train. The station was crammed with people returning from the Review and people going to see the Illumination of the Fleet. In three-quarters of an hour we got into our train and were off. "Heyho, grandpa!" says Master Bob, "did you see that flash of lightning?"

Thenceforward till we reached Sandown the whole island was now and then lighted up with sheet lightning. We congratulated ourselves that we were safe for Sandown, and in fact we reached our station all right. There we found another great crowd, and after that—the deluge. There we were, within half a mile of home, unable to move out. It was as if a water spout had burst over that particular station; the rush of water off the roofs on to the rails was like the falls of Lodore or a small Niagara. The crowd was increased by the arrival of two more trains. "Just the weather for fishermen," we were told. "This is just what I hope and trust his Majesty

King Edward VII. will have," said one. "What d'ye mean by that?" cried several. "A long rain," said our humorist, and the rather doubtful joke was received with applause. After waiting there an hour and a half, and the rain steadily pouring and not intending to stop, we resolved, all unprepared as we were, to make a dash through it, and we reached our home like drowned fishermen at eleven o'clock.

While we were fishing our eldest boy, Ted, had biked over to Ryde to see the Review and then biked home again, a ride of about twenty miles. Not content with that he went off again at seven o'clock to see the Fleet illuminated—the storm came on before the lighting up began. He started back at nine o'clock, and reached home—not to put too fine a point on it—rather wet. The night was as dark as Erebus, and he came through all that downpour from which we had sheltered; he seemed to have enjoyed the trip, only the rain put his lamp out twice, and his chief fear was that a policeman might be calmly doing his duty in the deluge and be down upon him—a very likely contingency! It took three days to dry his clothes. Many scores of thousands who had gone out clad in

the lightest summer clothing to witness that grand spectacle from the hills above and the shores on both sides must have had like experience—and yet those who did see it report that the illumination itself was vastly improved by the blackness of darkness and the downpour of rain in which it was enveloped. We found a charming supper awaiting us, and so amid the merry chatter and laughter of our girls and boys we placidly enjoyed it and thankfully went to bed.

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